

D.Sc., followed by a Fellowship. His first public appointment was as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon. His scientific work was distinguished and exact, but during these years (1903-1906) his mind turned increasingly to questions of art and nationalism. According to *The Times* he initiated the movement for national education, the teaching of the vernacular in all schools, and the revival of Indian culture, and with these objects in view he became President of the Ceylon Social Reform Society.

His first monumental book, published in 1908, was *Mediæval Sinhalese Art*, and this was followed in 1913 by *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, which *The Times* calls "the standard work of reference on this subject." In the preface he gave expression to his philosophy of art. "The Hindus have never believed in art for art's sake; their art, like that of mediæval Europe, was art for love's sake." Both in art and in political and social outlook he had much in common with the thought of John Ruskin and William Morris.

With his first wife, who fully shared his outlook, he did much exploratory work in Ceylon and India before returning to England, when he soon went on to Boston, Massachusetts, where he held the post of Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Moham-hedan Art, and for thirty years he was Keeper of its great Museum of Fine Arts. In addition he was a Fellow of the Linnean Society and of the Geological Society, and one of the founders of the Royal India Society in London. So he became the chief interpreter of the life and art of the East to the Western World. He contributed many articles to magazines, including all the articles on Indian, Sinhalese, and Indonesian

Art in the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Among his books are *Hinduism and Buddhism*, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, and in the shorter but arresting *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* and other later works he further expounded his philosophy. Small wonder that the *New York Herald Tribune* called him "the scholar, curator and priest of Indian Art."

To honour and commemorate his 70th birthday last August a magnificent volume, with forty contributions from writers in many lands, and illustrated by some eighty plates and further textual illustrations, was published, but unhappily "A.K.C." had died before it could be presented. The occasion was further celebrated by a great meeting in the hall of the University of Ceylon, where a portrait was unveiled by the Chief Secretary, who read a tribute from the Governor-General to one whom the *Ceylon Daily News* in its leading article described as "so far the greatest Ceylonese of the twentieth century."

Dr. Coomaraswamy had just given up his post at Boston, with the intention of leading what he called "an approximately *vanaprastha* life" somewhere in the Himalayas. But this was not to be, for he died at Needham, Massachusetts, on September 9th, leaving a widow, two sons and a daughter, and a record and a reputation in their several ways unique.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Mr. Ashton Sanborn, Secretary, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*)

In 1917 Dr. Denman W. Ross, a Trustee of the Museum and one of its distinguished benefactors, made

a permanent gift of his large and varied collection, which had been on loan for many years. He greatly enhanced the scope and value of his gift by the addition of a collection of Indian art, thus establishing for the first time an Indian Section in an American museum. Most of the small bronzes in this collection, the Jaina manuscripts, all the Rajput paintings, and some of the Mughal paintings had been assembled by Dr. Coomaraswamy from whom Dr. Ross acquired them.

It was a natural corollary to the acquisition of this collection of Indian art that Dr. Coomaraswamy, who was of mingled Ceylonese and English parentage, with a degree from the University of London, should have been invited to arrange, study, and catalogue it. Thus it came about that he remained a member of the staff of the Museum for thirty years until his sudden death on 9th September, 1947.

During the earlier years of his service with the Museum he was active in recommending to the Trustees additions to the collection and in preparing a Catalogue, as well as a Portfolio of more than a hundred plates illustrating the collection, were issued by the Museum between 1923 and 1930. In his later years as Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian, and Muhammadan Art, he devoted his attention almost entirely to philosophical, ethical, and religious studies, seeking primarily to reveal what he considered the common basis of Oriental and Western philosophic thought.

His productivity as an author in an abstruse field was phenomenal, and by his writings, by his lectures far and wide, and by his voluminous correspondence with scholars throughout the world he established for

himself an international reputation as a scholar and an author.

His appearance was arresting, for he was tall and spare of figure with a leonine head of hair and an ascetic face, usually grave but which on occasion could soften into an engaging smile. Not long before his death he had expressed the intention of returning to India to live out the rest of his life in philosophical retirement, but fate decreed that only his ashes should return to his native country,—to Banaras the Sacred City of the Hindus.

A RARE SPIRIT WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO MEET IN A LIFE-TIME

(*Dr. Richard St. Barbe Baker, Dorset, England*).

It was in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, that I first met Ananda Coomaraswamy. I had come over from England to give an archaeological lecture in Boston and the Doctor was most helpful in tracing for me references to trees in Oriental art. This led to a friendship which was strengthened during the years which followed.

By a strange coincidence he was also a correspondent of my colleague Henry G. Finlayson, Executive Secretary of the *Men of the Trees*, who had sent in previously *The Providential Order of Fairplay*, on which Dr. Coomaraswamy's contribution to *Trees* was a commentary. To give readers an opportunity of seeing for themselves what so interested the Doctor it will be as well to read the original article, which appeared in *Trees, Journal of the Men of the Trees*, (Spring issue, 1945 Page 107-108).

This conception is in advance of present thought, but I felt that my good friend in Boston was striving towards the same end, as far as I could judge both from my personal conversations and from his writings. This was confirmed by the contribution which appeared under the title: *Mr. Finlayson's Providential Order of Fairplay in the October issue of Trees*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Pages 69-71) including note by H.G.F.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's picture of ancient thought comes very close to the view which advanced conservationists are now entertaining. It is to be regretted that he did not live to see the fulfilment of his vision. He would have been deeply moved if he had seen the leading article in the issue of *Trees*. (*Spring Issue 1948—Pages 115-118*).

Coomaraswamy was one of those rare spirits we are privileged to meet in a life-time. His indictment of modern Western civilisation was justified insofar as it is now evident that our way of life cannot be maintained. We are characteristically consumers, appallingly weak in natural genius, and are now suffering the effects of the ruthless exploitation we have so long practised. Dr. Coomaraswamy saw hope in the universal application of the providential order of fairplay and already we are encouraged by the fact that forty-four countries have united to conserve and replenish the natural resources of the earth in spirit if not yet in actual operation.

ONE OF EARTH'S CHOICEST SPIRITS

(Mr. Henry G. Finlayson, Dorset, England.)

At the request of Richard St. Barbe Baker, the
Editor of *Trees*, Journal of the Men of the Trees, I

formulated the minimum price of Humanity's existence on this planet as respect for earth, neighbour and better self, and he published the article in *Trees* in Spring 1945 under the title: *The Providential Order of Fairplay*. He was surprised to find that, although the effort was important, no comment was made on it. After waiting in vain for a response he asked me whether I knew anybody who could comment intelligently on such a subject. I told him that the only man in the world I could think of who would be able and willing to do so was Dr. Coomaraswamy, whose letters and articles in the Press had led me to believe him to be one of the strangely few men of free intelligence and integrity. As it happened, Richard St. Barbe Baker knew him personally and at once asked him for the comment which eventually appeared in *Trees* in Autumn 1945. I had never seen Dr. Coomaraswamy but corresponded with him, and I had come to regard him as one of earth's choicest spirits.

A TRULY DEDICATED LIFE

(Sri Sisir Kumar Ghose, Santiniketan, India.)

Three years ago, far from home, in Boston, died a great contemporary, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. It was the end of a truly dedicated life, and its greatness will grow as the years pass. As Rothenstein said, "Today, if India takes her due rank as a first class artistic power, it is in large measure owing to Coomaraswamy." But Coomaraswamy's works are food for the grown-up, he could not be popular or a populariser. An age obsessed with the trivial and the transitory, bent on disintegrating the physical atom no less than

the human personality, naturally neglects, where it does not condemn, the defenders of the significant and the eternal. Coomaraswamy himself chose to work in comparative obscurity, so much so that, for a person of his importance, he is little known outside learned and artistic circles. Studiously avoiding all forms of dilettantism he did not crave for the approval of the market place. His inner life was his own affair and he did not press it before the public gaze.

It is an interesting and instructive lesson how the young Director of Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon suffered a sea-change and turned into a devotee and champion of the 'traditional' view of Art and Truth. It was while working in Ceylon that Coomaraswamy found out for himself the futility of imposing western European culture on oriental life and oriental arts. The mineralogist grew interested in the relics of ancient art, 'fossils' that spoke a strange wordless language which he could not at first decipher. From these he focussed his attention to the way of life—which included its forms of thought—from which this art had sprung. He would go to the roots, even to the "roots above," he would track Wisdom to its Source.

From 1905 to 1917 Coomaraswamy travelled widely both in Europe and in the East, gaining a first hand knowledge of the arts of different places and different periods, a knowledge which was to be useful to him in his later work. Some of his books on oriental art had already been published and in 1917 he was appointed Research Fellow in Indian, Iranian and Mohammedan Art in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, a position he held with distinction till the time of his death.

Curator and collector, Coomaraswamy made the Indian section of the Boston museum a thing of beauty, while as a critic he brought the meaning of that beauty to a far wider public. He is the author of more than sixty books and monographs, full of passion and profundity. It would require a good deal of intellectual competence to evaluate these volumes, yet what was Coomaraswamy's contention, in brief? That contention, to summarise the thesis of his last book, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?*, was that the normal or traditional view of art is one which conceives of art as rhetoric, as a means of expressing truth as distinct from a purely aesthetic activity. This, according to him, is the view which "the greater part of mankind has accepted from prehistoric times till yesterday." The artist, he believes, has a "priestly or ministerial" function and it is this which makes Christian and oriental religious art the same in kind and intention. Coomaraswamy's criticism in this matter is utterly sound—where most modern aberrations are just fury—though at times he allows the extremes of ascetical tendency to lead him to surprising conclusions. But he is by no means temperamental, he has an authority for every statement he makes, and not the least part of his scholarship, which draws from more than half a dozen languages and ranges freely from theology to anthropology, is the forest of footnotes without which no article by Coomaraswamy is ever complete!

But it is not merely in the role of a scholar or connoisseur that Coomaraswamy appeals to us. He is also a teacher, an *acharya*, a Master in the grand tradition. It may sound strange, but he is, or should be, one of the educating forces in India and the world.

During the years of the Swadesi, it was Coomaraswamy, who, along with Annie Besant, Rabindranath, Sri Aurobindo and others, taught us the fine points of nationalism which politicians are apt to overlook. Coomaraswamy not only helped, in Europe and America, towards a better understanding of things Eastern but he had found in the traditional doctrine a wide formula of reconciliation between the East and the West. In this task he drew largely upon the truths of the spirit as revealed by the artists and mystics of all ages. For, to use his own words, "nations are built, not by politicians but by artists and philosophers." The one country where, in spite of vicissitudes, the traditional doctrine has persisted and shown a marvellous power of renewal is India. That is why he is emphatic that "India's contribution to the world does not and can never justify her children in believing that her work is done. There is work for her to do, which if not done by her will remain ever undone." Few Indians have been so alive to that trust and duty as Coomaraswamy. His insight, incisiveness and power of exposition were all used in the service of the truth which he had seen so clearly and from which he never swerved.

"What is the purpose of art?" (he had once been asked).

"Effective communication, as ever."

"But what can works of art communicate?"

"Let us tell the painful truth," retorted Coomaraswamy, "that most of these are about God, whom nowadays we never mention in polite society."

But God and art are not to be approached through the intellect and metaphysics alone and we are not



surprised that Coomaraswamy the intellectual was at heart a Vaishnava.

How will we honour this great teacher? How will a free India honour the memory of this lover of all things beautiful and true? A Coomaraswamy Institute, a Coomaraswamy Memorial Lecture or a Chair of Aesthetics, preferably at Santiniketan, are some of the possible ways in which we can hope to continue the work so nobly begun and conducted by him. For in the last analysis the manner in which we continue his work will be the measure of our gratitude to him.

THE SCIENTIST

(*Dr. K. Kularatnam, M.A., D.Sc., University of Ceylon, Colombo*).

The first Ceylonese Doctor of Science of the University of London, a Fellow of University College, London and a Geologist by training, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy arrived in Ceylon in 1903 at the age of 26. He worked at his own expense for a year at mineralogy and geology. His scientific discoveries roused opinion in London and Ceylon to have a Department of Mineralogy. He accepted for four years the post of Director. At the expiration of the period he left Ceylon. True to high geological tradition, Coomaraswamy spent most of his time in the field, conducting his traverses on foot and by bullock cart and thus came to know his Minerals and Rocks very intimately indeed. Here lies the secret of his success and also of his early introduction to the new fields of art, archaeology, religion and sociology, whose attractions, unfortunately for Ceylon and Geology, tore him away so early in his career from his first love! —By

direct personal contact, he came to know the place, folk and their work well. His discoveries during that short period and the contributions he made to Geology and Mineralogy perhaps far outweigh the total output of all his successors during the past forty years, despite their luxury limousines and lounges without which, it is to be regretted, geological work apparently refuses to get a start to-day.

Apart from the classic *Administration Reports of the Mineral Survey of Ceylon* which contain the accounts of his field surveys and investigations, Coomaraswamy published several authoritative papers and academic discussions in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*; the *Geological Magazine, London*; *British Association Reports*; the *Mineralogical Magazines*; the *Spolia Zeylanica*, the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Other contributions of no mean importance are the *Glossary of Sinhalese Mining Terms and names of Gems*, and a *Bibliography of Ceylon Geology* (1906) which has since been brought up-to-date and published separately by Wadia. Coomaraswamy's mind and thought worked far ahead of his time. This needs no proof when we recall how on some of the intricate problems of petrology and mineralogy which he raised in his papers on (1) the Crystalline limestones of Ceylon, (2) Graphite, (3) the scapolite-wollastonite rocks of the Galle Series, (4) the Balangoda Group, etc., no finality of opinion has yet crystallised out, though the attention of several outstanding geologists in Europe and America has been focussed on them during the past forty years.

Among the discoveries of economic importance to Ceylon made by Coomaraswamy were the finds of workable occurrences of mica, graphite, corundum

(ruby and sapphire), moonstone, iron-ore, rare-earth minerals and others,—all accomplished within the short period of four years. The first large-scale geological map published of any considerable area in Ceylon was that of a part of the Kandy District by him in 1906. It is significant that since then no smaller map has ever been issued, but for two small-scale sketch geological maps of the Island by Adams and Coates. Considering the importance of large-scale geological maps as one of the primary foundations of agricultural and industrial planning it is a crying shame that the country has been kept waiting for nearly half a century and not received even a single sheet of this essential pre-requisite. Coomaraswamy's divorce from Geology has therefore definitely resulted in irreparable loss to our economic progress. What is most urgently required to-day to remedy this extremely unsatisfactory position, is a strong central body composed of scientists, agriculturists, industrialists and businessmen to guide and direct the Geological Department to give first place to first things and to bring about a better co-ordination of work between sister Departments.

No account, however brief, of Coomaraswamy's career as a geologist and mineralogist can afford to miss some of his spectacular discoveries. In the year 1904, a new mineral was identified and added to the list known to mineralogists. It is a cubic mineral of high specific gravity which on analysis proved to be an oxide of thorium and uranium. The cubes are usually very small (about 2/10 inch) and the colour is dark brown. This mineral was discovered by Coomaraswamy. It is a pity this fact is not generally known, especially as the importance of this mineral

has today been immensely enhanced because of its radioactive properties. As is characteristic of Coomaraswamy's scientific modesty, instead of immortalising his own name through this mineral,—a practice extremely common with mineralogists, e.g. Allanite, Fergusonite, Geikeilite, Baddeleyite, etc,—he preferred to name it simply as thorianite,* after the principal chemical element, thorium, present in it. It was only as a result of a letter (dated 28-12-44) received by the present writer from Dr. Coomaraswamy's son, Rama, asking for a specimen of 'thorianite, (father's discovery),' that he was led to seek and find confirmation of this fact! Serendibite, Geikielite and Baddeleyite were other minerals discovered in Ceylon in Coomaraswamy's time.

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY DAY IN CEYLON

(Dr. M. D. Raghavan, National Museums, Colombo.)

We are met here to honour a great Ceylonese, one of the most notable sons of Lanka, one whose name and fame has traversed the bounds of this picturesque Island. In the remembrance of this Day which we treasure as Ananda Coomaraswamy Day, we feel an abiding interest, as the birthday of one who was among the earliest of the sons of Lanka to hold up the torch of learning which has lit up the whole world, and who has held aloft the banner of nationalism in Sri Lanka with a lofty sense of love for the land of his birth. The significance of this day, is one

* E. K. Cook. Geography of Ceylon, pg. 74. "A very remarkable rare mineral" called thorianite which was first found in Ceylon (in 1903) is also associated with veins.

**Coomaraswamy A. K. The New Mineral (Spolia Zeylanica, Vol. II, pg. 57.)

which we recognise, would grow with the years. In thus honouring a great soul we honour ourselves which makes us conscious of our own *Dharma*, how best to acclaim the distinguished son of Lanka that Ananda Coomaraswamy is. Much has been already said and written of Ananda Coomaraswamy which shows that in himself he is an inexhaustible field of study. That is the mark of a great man. I have no doubt that as the years roll on, the future generations would spend more and more thought and time, interpreting his thoughts and ideas which he has expressed in his prodigious output of books and research-papers, lectures and essays, the great interpreter that he was, from science to arts and culture, from culture to metaphysics and philosophy, and from philosophy to religion and art criticism.

If here I may give a personal touch to this occasion, it is to the day when some years ago, I had the good fortune to have a day with him when he visited the Madras Museum. I had the supreme delight and the great privilege of conducting him over the archaeological and sculpture galleries of the Madras Museum. I had often in the day to look up to his towering figure and meet the gaze of his sharp intellectual eyes, presenting a picture of a gripping personality.

The recollection of that day has often recurred to me. It recurred to me in August 1947 when we in Ceylon celebrated his 70th birthday, under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Collins. On that day was unveiled at the St. George's Hall, the striking portrait which we see before us today in this Hall. That celebration we owe to the foresight of Dr. G. P. Malalasekera. Little did we who participated in that celebration then realise that, that was to be the last

Birthday that we were destined to celebrate during his life time. For the great soul passed away on the 9th September of the same year.

The present move to celebrate the event has come to us from the Museums Association of India which really has a great responsibility in this matter, because the National Museums of Ceylon is an integral member of the Museums Association of India.

Ananda Coomaraswamy comes of eminent Tamil ancestry— of a distinguished family from Manipay—in Jaffna a family distinguished for its public services. His father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy has had the distinction of being the first Asiatic to receive a Knighthood, and the first Ceylonese to be called to the Bar in the reign of Queen Victoria. Within the course of an all too short a life span of 44 years, Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy did fruitful service in the Legislative Council and in the field of scholarship. Among his published works are translations of works in Pali such as *Dathavansa* and *Suttanipata*—Buddhist sacred works in Pali, and an English translation of the Hindu drama, *Arichandra*. Marrying an English lady of Kent, he returned to Ceylon in 1875 and took up residence in his new home “Rheinland,” in Bambalapitiya, which has given the place, its present name of Rheinland Place. It was in this Colombo home of Rheinland, that Ananda Coomaraswamy was born in August 1877. Shortly after, for the sake of the mother's health, the mother and the baby left for England. His father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy was not able to follow them to England, for death overtook him on 4th May 1879, it is said on the day on which he was to sail. Ananda Coomaraswamy had his education in England, first at Wycliffe College,

Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, and at University College, London, where he took his B.Sc. degree with honours and his D.Sc. degree later.

Returning to Ceylon at the young age of 23 almost his first public service was as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon from 1903-06, and his early publications were reports of the geology of the Island. Through the Social Reform Society which he founded on April 22nd, 1905 of which he was the President, and as the Editor of the *Ceylon National Review*, he made vigorous efforts to give the language of the Island, their rightful place in the scheme of the national education; and for the stimulation of indigenous arts and crafts. The first number of the Journal published his article which proclaimed the man—an article entitled *Kandyan Art, what it meant and how it ended.* In 1907, Coomaraswamy left Ceylon for England to publish his *Magnum Opus*, so far as Ceylon is concerned, the *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, which appeared in 1908. Opening with a socio-economic structure of the times, the book reviewed the state of the Sinhalese Arts and Crafts as they prevailed in the 18th century, with chapters giving a comprehensive review of the whole field of indigenous art. A national contribution of the greatest asset, the book is charged with intense national feeling, for the uplift of both the art and the artisan, and the craft and the craftsman. It is an inspired work the like of which has not been witnessed in Ceylon in the field of folk arts. In its appendices he has given us an insight into the life of the peoples such as the Kumbakaraya, or the Potter, and the Kinnaraya or the Matmaker,—in the folk songs which they sing as they work,—songs, which alas, are not heard today

in the villages of the craftsmen, mostly silenced by the economic hardship that these people have had to contend against.

Others have spoken of his approach to art, of his art criticism and his contribution to world knowledge. Speaking as an anthropologist, the thing that distinguishes him from others, is to my mind his cultural approach. He never worried over political or economical problems as such. His method was the cultural method and he believed strongly in the cultural approach to economic and political problems. Enthroned, the dethroned culture; best sums up his message, give stability of life to the artisan, to the craftsman, place him on his feet, enable him to live, enable him to sell his crafts, develop his art, do things to revive dying and dead craftsmanship, and all will be well; all economic and political progress would then fall in line. It is in this view of preaching the cultural life that his life work is of lasting value to this island. It is on this that he based the spirit of nationalism. The same message that he preached in Ceylon, he preached in India. His book *Essays in National Idealism*, published by G. A. Natesan of Madras in 1909, changed the course of life of many a man I knew. For, in the words of St. Paul, what is the use of gaining the whole world, and losing one's own soul. And it is to the soul, whether of Ceylon or of India, that he made his appeal. In the pages of his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, than which there is no greater work on Ceylon or in Ceylon,—barring of course the sacred books and the Ceylon Chronicles of old, Ananda Coomaraswamy has given us the material to work upon and revive national art. That it is bearing fruit today, there is considerable evidence.

The cultural approach is what we most need in Ceylon today—the cultural outlook to economic problems.

Yet another instance of Ananda Coomaraswamy's cultural approach, I may point out,—which shows how all embracing his insight was. In piecing together the trends of events in the development of the social system of the Sinhalese, I had the occasion recently to turn over the pages of *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*. I was surprised that Ananda Coomaraswamy has his own observations to make on this subject as well and his words have their own interest. Says he, "The Caste System of Ceylon is similar to the Dravidian in South India and differs from the well known four-fold caste division of the Hindus generally. The Sinhalese people from an early date had constant and intimate relations with the Tamils in South India. So it is that we find the Dravidian and not the Aryan Caste System among the Sinhalese. In this system, the cultivator, ranked the highest. With the spread of Aryan civilisation came the Brahmanical system, which was superimposed upon the Dravidian, so that the Brahmin and Kshatriya ranked above the cultivator."

As a student of Culture, Ananda Coomaraswamy took his stand on traditions. The glories of Lanka's past—the days of Anuradhapura, Pollonaruwa and Kandy—inspired him and he mourns the passing of the Kandyan monarchy which fostered the indigenous arts and crafts. A born critic of the creative and constructive type, he exposed the processes of degeneration of indigenous arts under the impact of changing conditions of life.

He clearly saw that in Ceylon the old order was changing, yielding place to new; It was Robert Louis Stevenson who observing the changes taking place in the life of the Pacific Islands of his generation exclaimed "Change is bloodier than bombardment."

Ananda Coomaraswamy felt likewise and his mission which he expounded in the pages of his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, was to stem this tide of change, to control it and to guide it in national channels. His prophetic words were not of much avail,—and indigenous arts languished. The problem has now come to us with greater force than ever, and national Lanka is proving that Coomaraswamy was right. It is the great secret of Lanka that despite Westernization in externals, there has always been the spark of nationalism awaiting revival. What has made such a revival now possible is the foundation that Ananda Coomaraswamy has laid in his own life and in his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*. There is yet another side to his life, which opens an as yet untouched aspect of Ananda Coomaraswamy's life. I mean his relations with the Colombo Museum.

Speaking of Ananda Coomaraswamy's work in the Colombo Museum, it is really another silver lining in Ceylon's cultural horizon. For in the Museum he did work which has paid higher dividends at the hands of the successive Directors of the Institution. His work the *Bronzes of Ceylon* published as a Museum publication is the only work of the kind on the metallic art of Ceylon, in the publication of which, he has laid the Department of Museums and students of art under a deep debt of gratitude. The Museum is indebted to him for a very handsome collection—which comprises a representative collection of all the sections—jewellery, mineralogy, textiles, pottery, brass work and bronzes. If I had more time—about a month before me, I would have brought together all his collections—whether purchased or donated, in one room in the Museum and made a special exhibition of

the Coomaraswamy collections. These collections are now distributed over almost all sections of the Museum. A few of them are here shown in this Hall. His attachment to this Museum can be indicated by the fact that even as late as 1937, he had the kindness to send from America a fine carved Kandyan Plank Bedstead with a typical Game Board cut out in a corner. It speaks much of Ananda Coomaraswamy's solicitude for the Colombo Museum that he should have taken pains to have this particular specimen shipped from Boston to Colombo. This plank-bed which you can see here, is a donation by him. The lacquered wooden Box for preserving Palm Leaf Manuscripts shown here is another unique object from his collection. His wife Mrs. Ethel M. Coomaraswamy was also interested in Sinhalese Embroidery work. The two embroidered Betel Bags shown in the case are from her collection. The blue bag with the *Nari-Lata* design in the centre is a unique specimen. Ananda Coomaraswamy's collections purchased for the Museum are mainly those described in his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, to which must be added those received from him as donations. I should not omit to mention that while on the Mineralogical Survey, he gave three Museum Lectures—on the General Principles of Geology; the Life History of Minerals; and Formation of Rocks and the General Geology of Ceylon. Himself and his Assistant Mr. Parsons also worked in the Museum gallery identifying, labelling and exhibiting mineralogical collections. Not only the Museum, the Library,—also benefited by his collection of Ola manuscripts, 111 of which were purchased for the Colombo Museum Library. A few of these are on view here. These collections and their association with Ananda

Coomaraswamy have often stirred in me the lines of the poet:—

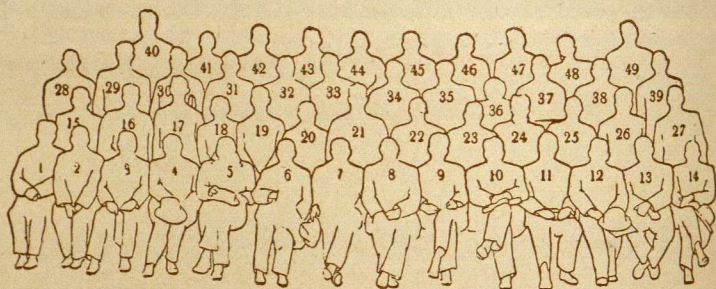
But, Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still.

India no doubt has great cause to honour a personality who more than any other single soul did most to interpret Indian art to the western mind, which had not till then be attuned to a proper understanding of the art of India; or to an appreciation of the cultural environment in which Indian Art found its inspiration and development. He was also the great apostle of Indian nationalism in its cultural aspect. In this respect his name is remembered in India as much as that of Rabindranath Tagore, and rightly revered as one of the great forces in the cultural Renaissance of India.

I would not have thought that in Ceylon we needed the lead of India to honour her own sons. India has indeed a way of honouring her great sons, which we might as well emulate—one of favourite methods is to present a volume of essays and papers to a distinguished person on his sixtieth or seventieth birthday. We have had a great example recently in the volume of essays presented to Jawaharlal Nehru on his sixtieth birthday. In this volume is included one of the Polonnaruwa bronzes—the figure of Sunderamurthiswami, a figure which Ananda Coomaraswamy has illustrated and described in his *Ceylon Bronzes*. Here then is a link with Ceylon, that finds a place in this magnificent volume of essays published under the name of *Nehru Abhinandan Granth*. I cannot recollect such a move having been made in Ceylon to honour the name

of Ananda Coomaraswamy. So it was with gratification that I came by a volume of Essays presented to our distinguished Ceylonese on his 70th Birthday under the editorship of Mr. Bharatha Iyer entitled *Art and Thought*. The contributors are all from India, Europe and America. This book of Essays saw the light of day as a posthumous tribute, though I understand a proof copy of the Book was rushed to Coomaraswamy at the birthday dinner held at the Harvard Club. What I mean to point out is that here in Ceylon we could do something worthwhile yet to honour the name of such a great gem of Ceylon—as Ananda Coomaraswamy was, a gem that has shone all over the world ‘with a lustre of the purest ray serene,’ that it is time to turn our thoughts as to how best we can perpetuate his memory. Whatever form such a memorial may take, it should be something in tune with the spirit of his own life’s work in Ceylon, such as an endowment for a research scholarship for the promotion of the arts of this Island. I find I am not the first to express this opinion, for a Ceylonese has already conveyed the same idea in these words, “We in Ceylon who cannot boast of great men with the same moral or intellectual stature as those in India, must appropriate this noble son of Ceylon before he is claimed or acclaimed by others.” In this connection I should mention that an interesting compilation entitled *Homage to Kalayogi, Ananda Coomaraswamy*—*A garland of Tributes*, has been edited and published by S. Durai Raja Singam of Kuantan, Malaya, which brings together contributions from admirers far and near.

[Speech delivered at the Coomaraswamy Day Celebrations held in Colombo on August 22nd 1950.]



NEAR EASTERN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Myron B. Smith | 26. Halford Hoskins |
| 2. John A. Wilson | 27. Edward Jurji |
| 3. Edwin E. Calverley | 28. Ernest Dawn |
| 4. George Sarton | 29. Charles B. Fahs |
| 5. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy | 30. Mortimer R. Graves |
| 6. Abdulhak Adnan Adivar | 31. Franz Rosenthal |
| 7. Philip K. Hitti | 32. W. Norman Brown |
| 8. H. A. R. Gibb | 33. T. Cuyler Young |
| 9. G. Levi Della Vida | 34. Sidney S. Glazer |
| 10. Costi K. Zurayk | 35. Amir Boktor |
| 11. Richard Ettinghausen | 36. Ilse Lichtenstadter |
| 12. Matta Akrawi | 37. Donald N. Wilber |
| 13. Gustave E. Von Grunebaum | 38. J. Christy Wilson |
| 14. Mehmet Aga-Oglu | 39. Walter L. Wright, Jr. |
| 15. M. Hessaby | 40. Harry Hazard |
| 16. Mostafa M. Hafez | 41. G. R. Loehr |
| 17. R. Bayly Winder | 42. Willard Beling |
| 18. Harold W. Close | 43. George M. Barakat |
| 19. George C. Miles | 44. Harold Hoskins |
| 20. William Thomson | 45. H. D. Howard |
| 21. E. P. Arbez | 46. Izz-al-Din Al Yasin |
| 22. Jibra'il Jabbur | 47. Robert R. Solenberger |
| 23. Solomon L. Skoss | 48. M. Sherif Basoglu |
| 24. Florence E. Day | 49. Wilfred Smith |
| 25. Eric F. F. Bishop | |

Members of the Princeton
University Conference
Group.



TRIBUTES FROM TWO FRIENDS IN 'ARS ISLAMICA'

(Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, Washington)

When Ananda K. Coomaraswamy passed away on September 9, 1947, the world of Oriental studies lost one of its great pioneers. Parentage, training, and personal taste imparted to him a predilection for Indian art and for Rajput painting in particular, yet he contributed a great deal to research in Mughal and Persian painting and iconography. His catalogues of the Indian and Persian miniature collections in the Boston Museum are done with great devotion and knowledge and are thus indispensable to the student in the field. As his life work unfolded Dr. Coomaraswamy's major aim became a search for the meaning of works of art together with a desire to show the inherent unity in the different artistic idioms of traditional civilizations. Through his many contributions he not only increased our knowledge in this respect, but exerted also a decided influence on other scholars whom he led beyond a purely esthetic appreciation of art objects.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's contributions to *Ars Islamica* represent his endeavour to trace the meaning of pictures and symbols in Islamic art and to relate them to other civilizations, they also give witness to his search in ever-widening spiritual regions. This approach is epitomized in a short but significant paper entitled *A Note on the Philosophy of Persian Art* which represented his comments during the art session of the conference on Near Eastern Culture and Society during the Bicentennial celebrations of Princeton University in March 1947. It seems fitting that

Dr. Coomaraswamy's last contribution in the field of Islamic art is published in this journal, on whose Consultive Committee he served since its inception.

To anyone familiar with the departed scholar's work—and even to one who has only glanced at the bibliography of his writings published in 1942, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday, in Volume IX of *Ars Islamica*—it is obvious that his research in Islamic art was but one facet of his many activities. To do fuller justice to his memory the following memorial by one of his close friends is printed.

From

(Dr. Benjamin Rowland, Jr., Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.)

With Dr. Coomaraswamy's passing it is difficult to say whether the field of Oriental art has lost one of its greatest interpreters or, as his epitaph, to state that the *philosophia perennis* has been deprived of its most articulate exponent in our generation. For many of us his death is such a personal sorrow in the departure of an old friend, always ready to counsel in matters metaphysical or practical, that we are less aware of the full significance of his loss to the world. From his earliest publications on the mineralogy and geology of Ceylon in the first year of our century up to the appearance of his last major work, *Time and Eternity* (Ascona: *Artibus Asiae*, 1947), Dr. Coomaraswamy, to quote Goethe, "became in the different stages of his life a different being." The first of Dr. Coomaraswamy's many *avatars* was as a scientist studying the rocks and precious minerals of his native island of Ceylon. After a short period dedicated



**Near Eastern Culture and Society (Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaaraswamy at
Princeton Univ., Bicentennial Conference, 1946, Conference Group).**

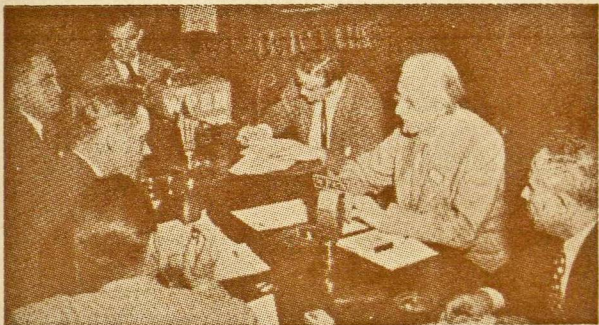
to attempted social reforms in India and Ceylon, he turned to writing on Indian and Sinhalese art, at first, perhaps, as a surer means of properly interpreting India to the Western world.

There could be no more appropriate description of Dr. Coomaraswamy's real stature than Goethe's definition of the creative writer: "When a writer leaves monuments on the different steps of his life, it is important that he should have an innate foundation and good will; that he should, at each step, have seen and felt clearly, and that, without any secondary aims, he should have said distinctly and truly what has passed through his mind. Then will his writings, if they were right at the step where they originated, remain always right, however the writer may develop or alter himself in after times." Dr. Coomaraswamy's publications, it is instinctively felt, will "remain always right." His *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (Leipzig, New York, London, 1927) remains the standard work on the subject, just as his later essays on "the traditional or normal view of art" are models of exegesis that belong to quite another phase of his being. The metamorphosis of Coomaraswamy, the art historian, into Coomaraswamy, the quester after the meaning of the metaphysical basis of form in traditional art, is already accomplished as early as 1933 in his *New Approach to the Vedas* (London: Luzac, 1933). Although it might seem that in his last years Dr. Coomaraswamy was less interested in works of art, it is not that he loved art less, but truth more. The whole effort of his intellect in this final decade of his life was dedicated to revealing how human cultures in all their apparent diversity are but the dialects of one and the same language of

the spirit, that there is "a common universe of discourse' transcending the differences of tongues."¹

Dr. Coomaraswamy was careful to say, "I have never built up a philosophy of my own or wish to establish a new school of thought."¹ The influence of his works dealing with traditional art and tradition has been extraordinary: it has been both extraordinarily good and extraordinarily bad. Nothing could have been clearer than his statement of the meaning of Oriental and Mediaeval art and that this meaning expressed in inevitable artistic terms was of greater significance than what our art historians describe as "style." His inveighing against art without meaning was healthy and timely, too, at a moment when the cult of unintelligibility in modern art was at its zenith. Although many scholars, including the writer, are grateful to Dr. Coomaraswamy for turning their thoughts to the meaning of meaning in art, the influence of his words in other directions has been anything but fortunate. Although Dr. Coomaraswamy never even remotely suggested the desirability or the possibility of a return to a traditional art in this untraditional age, his late repudiation of post-Renaissance art seemed to offer a kind of escape for anyone who could not adjust himself to modern art as a result of an inability to adjust to modern life. Flight into the past or to exotic corners of the world is nothing new: once upon a time it used to be called Romanticism. Dr. Coomaraswamy did not mean his words to be taken as a kind of emotional, sentimental

¹This and other quotations, unless otherwise noted are from the typescript of Dr. Coomaraswamy's farewell address to a group of friends on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, August 22, 1947.



Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy at the "Near Eastern Culture and Society" Bicentennial Conference, Princeton University, March, 1947.

Conference participants assemble around the WPEN Philadelphia, microphone for a broadcast from the Graduate College Library. Reading clockwise around the table from the left are: Alan Grey and Robert Johnson of WPEN, Matta Akrawi, Director of Higher Education for Iraq, Horace Fowler of WPEN, Dan D. Coyle '38, Assistant Director of Public Relations, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Habib A. Kurani of the State Department (Top)—H. A. R. Gibb, Professor of Arabic, the University of Oxford, and Ananda K. Coomara-

substitute for reason. He did not recommend a return to primitivism or mediaevalism in art any more than he advocated our wearing coats of mail. For the ills of our modern world, he prescribed a change of heart and not a change of costume. Although he pointed out the inferiority of art for art's sake to art made to fulfill a need in a traditional society, it would be a mistake to believe that Dr. Coomaraswamy categorically repudiated every aspect of post-Renaissance art. "The artist's function is not simply to please, but to present an ought-to-be-known in such a manner as to please when seen or heard, and so expressed as to be convincing."² That Dr. Coomaraswamy discerned this function even in certain modern painters could be illustrated by objects in his own collection: the last actual work of art that the writer discussed with Dr. Coomaraswamy was a water colour in his home by Charles Demuth, in which he could recognize an almost Oriental sensitivity to the growth and articulation of things in nature.

The universality of Dr. Coomaraswamy's interests has so often been remarked on that there is little need to catalogue his attainments here.³ The all-embracing nature of his creative intuitive interpretation of related concepts in separate cultures can nowhere be better illustrated than in the magisterial and definitive paragraph—a single footnote to the *Transformation of Nature in Art*—which gives the complete essence of the meaning of the first of Hsieh Ho's Six Principles of

²A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (London, 1946), p. 250.

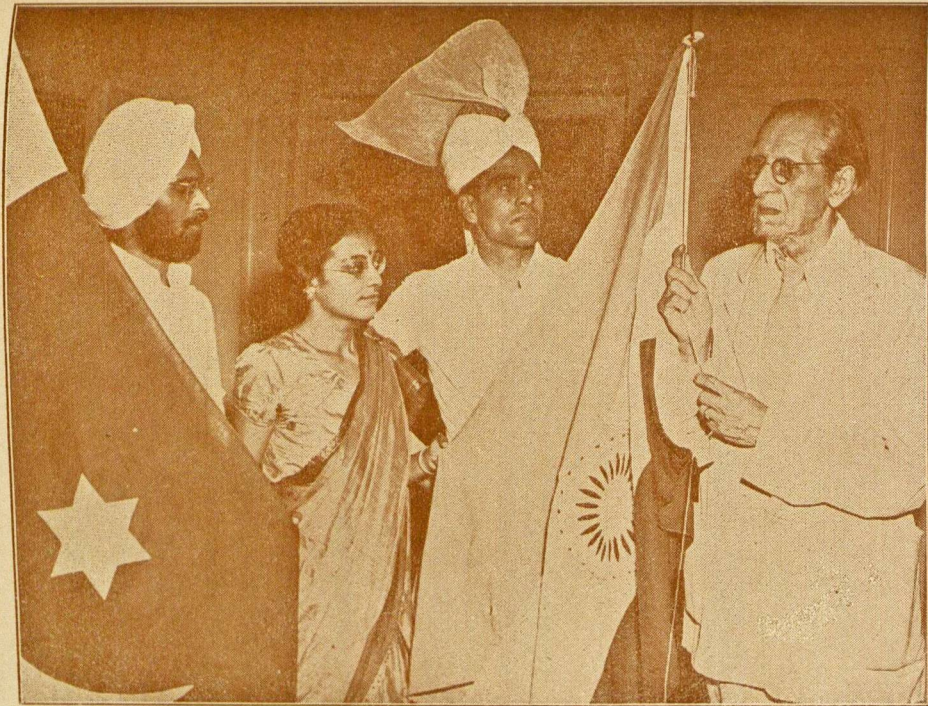
³R. Ettinghausen, in H. Ladd, "The Writings of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy," *Ars Islamica*, IX, (1942), 125; J. A. Pope, "Review of *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*" *Review of Religions*, VIII (1944), 314-319.

Painting, *ch'i-yun sheng-tung*, in its relation to the Indian concepts of *cetana* and *prana*.⁴ That Dr. Coomaraswamy's interests included the Islamic field is not surprising in view of the importance of Arabic and Persian scientists, philosophers, and mystics in the preservation of traditional knowledge. Although it cannot be discerned from a perusal of a bibliography of his writings, the reading of books like the *Transformation of Nature in Art and Time and Eternity* will reveal that he was as familiar with the ideas of Ibn Hazm and Djala al-Din Rumi as he was with the *Summa Theologia*.

Although Dr. Coomaraswamy was happily acclimated to his American environment, he always felt a strong link with his homeland. The writer remembers with what happiness and pride Dr. Coomaraswamy on one of the last days of his life displayed the many newspaper clippings with tributes for his seventieth birthday which had just arrived from Ceylon.⁵ One of his last official acts was the raising of the Indian flag at a meeting for Indian students marking the Indian declaration of Independence. If on this occasion he seemed, for some, unduly critical, it was because he wished to impress on his countrymen the necessity to "be themselves" in a world of "organized barbarism and political pandemonium." Over and beyond the satisfaction that he must have felt at the appreciation of his work in India, Dr. Coomaraswamy had come to feel more and more the necessity to seek

⁴A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 186-187 (p. 19, note 20).

⁵Tributes published in the *Kesari*, Jaffna, Ceylon taken from *Homage to Kalayogi Ananda Coomaraswamy* edited by S. Durai Raja Singam and tributes in the *Ceylon Daily News and Times of Ceylon*.



Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy with India's Flag at the Independence Day Celebration, Boston, August 15, 1947—Boston Globe.



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and know from experience his spiritual home that logically he had come to know so well. With the gradual unraveling of so many threads in the web of traditional learning, Dr. Coomaraswamy's understanding had come to involve belief, and only a short time before his death he announced his plans for a return to India, a home-going (*asram gamana*) with the ultimate aim of fulfilling the last stage (*asrama*) in a pilgrimage to the fabulous mountain-home of the gods, for him the penetration to the heart of the great *mandala* that is the end of his and every pilgrimage, the realization of what he implied in his farewell: "May I know and become what I am, no longer this man So-and-so, but the Self that is also the Being of all beings, my Self and your Self."

[Another tribute of Dr. Benjamin Rowland appears on page 45.—Ed.]

ANANDA, THE BLESSED ONE, WAS A PRESENCE THAT IT IS HARD TO BE WITHOUT

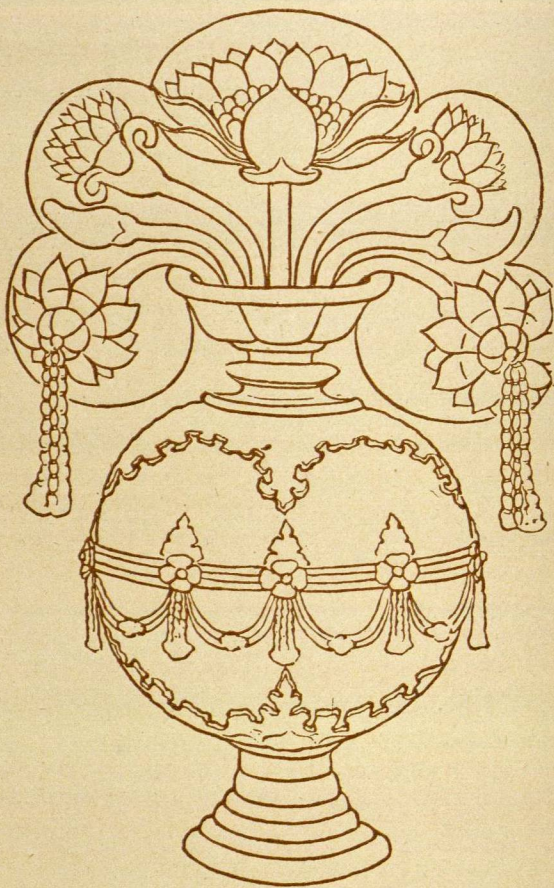
(Mrs. Margaret Marcus, Cleveland Museum, Ohio)

From the moment I had read his *Dance of Shiva*, I have been stimulated and moulded in my thinking and values by Coomaraswamy's intrinsically creative writings; writings, which as I learned to know him over some twenty-six years, I grew to realize were but one aspect of the expression of a rich and complex personality. He was one of those rare ones who wanted the great myth, the ideal way of life and being to come alive again in universal measure. He believed that this was possible, as Confucius did, and almost identically followed Confucius' logic for this

end. "Rectify your terms, clarify your thinking, and your character and conduct will grow in the right direction." In more ways than this he was close to Confucius, not through direct influence at any point, but because the intuitive thinking of both men was the same. Coomaraswamy insisted, for instance, as Confucius did, that nothing he said was new, that he found through tireless research what was lost and translated out of many tongues to remind us of a great tradition that we had forgotten. How like Confucius as he sought the poems of the provinces of China to find in them the evidence of a pure tradition, or pored over the Book of Changes for a similar revelation!

As I have felt that the stress in much editorial comment has been on Coomaraswamy's vast erudition and scholarship I wish to emphasize that in my evaluation of him, his creativeness is the essential point, in fact it was the very motive behind his scholarship. It is my conviction that Coomaraswamy was at no time merely piecing together as scholar and researcher the broken strands of a precious, once unbroken, mesh that had held all members of a society, even the weakest, safe within its web. His brilliant observations of analogies between attitude of thought over the centuries and over the world were a *making* not a recording. He heard and saw in a process of creation not recreation. Just as Kasyapa saw the true meaning of the lotus in the hand of the Buddha.

Even the early interpretation of the meaning of the south Indian dancing Shiva was a creation. The iconographical factors essential to this meaning were there for all to see but it was Coomaraswamy's alive-



Bowl with Lotuses after a line drawing by Dr.
Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his work on
Yaksas.



ness to relevance and meaning, that brought these factors into a form of thought. This is true creativeness. And what jewels of interpretation followed this, through the years; as his reading of the significance of the Chinese t'ao t'ieh mask (equally applicable to the mysterious Totonac "yoke") hidden away in a book review in the *College Art Bulletin*.

From beginning to end he hungered for meaning, and a meaningful background conducive to spontaneous living, authentic, homogeneous, traditional. How well I remember how he welcomed such backgrounds when he found them, as he did among the Melanesians whom Malinowski describes, or the Tibetans, in Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas*, the Esquimos in Poncins and Galantieres *Kabloona*.

I cannot refrain from remembering all the further ways in which he expressed himself as a creative person aside from his writings. He was a master draftsman, either with pencil or with brush. Few people realized how many of the immaculate drawings with which his articles were illustrated were his own. How amazing they are, never dull copies, never free interpretations, but always capturing completely the spunky vitality of a Bharhut relief, the radiant beauty of an Amarvati form! More than this he did independent brush and pen, or pencil subjects. These were most often in the traditional Indian style of the Rajput school, masterly in the way that the fluent line indicated the contours of the forms involved; although he could also handle delicate washes in chiaroscuro in the western manner if he chose. He was a photographer of real distinction. This medium, as well as that of the brush, he used to record the essence of mood or fact.

He wrote poems too, as tender, direct, and fine in form as those of early Provence. Eric Gill was chosen to illustrate his *Three Poems*. These were love poems. His understanding of eros is a matter of great interest as he saw its roots in traditional Oriental thinking and philosophical symbolism and so in essence sanctified. In each and every phrase of these, he binds personal love with God and his works; as when he writes in *From New England Woods*

“My breasts and feet are fair and fine
But not more silvery than the birch
And not more fragrant than a flower
Do not desire me more than these.
As you love trees and clouds love me”

or in *Body and Soul*

“Adrift on such sea
I am evermore free
Dear branch of God’s tree”

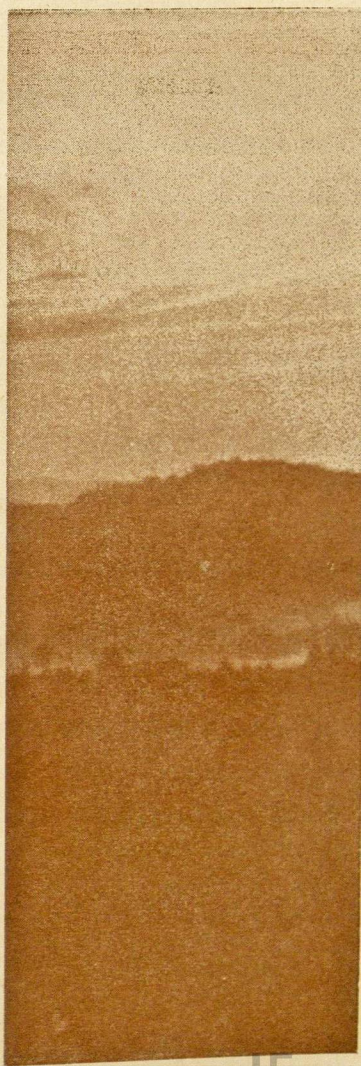
or in *Beauté de ma Belle*

“J’ai vu la beauté de ma belle
N’a jamais vecu une autre telle
Et pour ses lèvres et pour les seins
Je loue toujours le bon Dieu”
.....Plutot toujours grace a Dieu!
.....Encore toujours grace a Dieu!

Besides poetry, painting, and photography, he did many other things. In England he had his own printing press and both printed and bound the books that he had translated. He was an intelligent and eager gardener and an enthusiastic fisherman. In fact there was nothing that he ever did, or thought, or was as a person, that was alien to, that did not move toward, his primary desire: to touch life at its quick, directly and creatively. One of the greatest



Yaksi Chanda from Bharhut, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's drawing, from *Yaksas*, Smithsonian Institution Publication.



Landscape—a photograph by Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy.

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Centre for the Arts

gifts that he had for those who knew him was himself. Never have I known a more generous man, nor one with less awareness of himself, less ego. He spent himself more lavishly than anyone can ever measure on those who were near to him or who came to him for help. That there were degrees and measures of achievement in other men never entered his mind. He made everyone feel that he was capable of anything that he chose to achieve. In fact, with those whom he loved most, he could not rest until they had a creative outlet of their own. Tender, sensitive, confident and compassionate to his fellow man Ananda, the blessed one, was a presence that it is hard to be without.

COOMARASWAMY AND AMERICA

(Mr. William E. Ward, Cleveland Museum, Ohio.)

As the bee collects nectar and departs without injuring the flower, or its color or scent, so let a sage dwell in his village.

—*The Dhammapada IV*

Few are there among men who arrive at the other shore; the other people here run up and down the shore.

—*The Dhammapada VI*

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's village was the countryside. But for many years of his life he was forced to live much against his better judgment first in an apartment and then in a home in Boston. To Boston he had been summoned from Ceylon. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts invited him to arrange, study and catalog a large collection of Indian art that

had been given to the Museum. After this initial task was completed he remained a member of the staff of the Museum for thirty years. His untimely death on the 9th of September, 1947, brought to a close the life of one of America's most brilliant scholars. (I say America because he had been adopted by American scholars).

During the later years of his life and work in America he did dwell in his village, for he took a small cottage in the country outside Boston and spent his summers fly-fishing and tending his garden in the wilds of Maine. "It is impossible for one to obtain salvation who lives in a town covered with dust."¹ Foremost in Dr. Coomaraswamy's mind there was always the dream that one day he would return to India and live his remaining years.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's love for nature was well illustrated in his numerous visits to dog shows in and around Boston. He was always a fond owner of dogs. And of course he spent long relaxing hours fishing in Maine. Frequently in his vivid and scholarly letters to friends one notes more than casual mention of gardens, *i.e.*, in a letter to Margaret F. Marcus, a devoted friend and student; "This summer we did mostly gardening in Maine. We have a really marvellous rock garden on the slope below our camp there, with a good many Alpines and Himalayans doing well in it."

We note also that while in the country if not hard at work in his garden he would be found at his desk. There was that inner creative force ever driving him to write and delve deeper into universal symbolism and philosophy. While a creative artist in every res-

¹Bandhayana Dharma Sutra II, 3, 6, 33 (tr. by A. K. C.)

pect we note a continuing desire to be as impersonal as possible in his writing; he spoke always out of a common storehouse of wisdom, as for example in a letter to Margaret F. Marcus; "Someday you must try to tell me what interests you in the material I assemble. You realize I say nothing, or try to say nothing, that can properly be attributed to me individually." It is this same impersonal point of view that we see in Indian and all of Oriental art:

"The Hindu sculptor is not a social personality; he does not choose his themes; his productions are neither useless ("fine art") nor meaningless ("decorative art"); he never exhibits himself; his work is "exhibited" only when set up in the place for which it was made; he is not interested in technique (as distinguished from application), but only in skill; his work is always intelligible to those who are his patrons."²

Dr. Coomaraswamy then gives us a view of the modern artist; he "is a special or abnormal kind of man endowed with a peculiar emotional sensibility which enables him to see what we call beauty."³

A good friend speaking of Dr. Coomaraswamy noted that he was interested in Western and Oriental culture, but equally at home in the primitive culture of the Pacific Islands and the American Indian culture before the white man. He was much concerned over the ugly connotation in the use of the word 'native' as applied by Europeans to the men whose land they had invaded. Here too we note that he

²*The League*, published by the Art Students League of New York, New York City, Spring, 1933, Volume 5, No. 3, page 4.

³*Blackfriars*, April 1935, p. 247.

concerned himself much over the misconception of literacy—as meaning only the ability to read and write as opposed to wisdom stored in the memory.

Upon completion of cataloging the Boston Museum's important collection he was persuaded to remain on the staff of the Museum as "Keeper of the Indian and Mohammedan Collection"; and because of his post with the Boston Museum their collections have grown and become among the finest and most important in the country, indeed equalling the collections of England. Much of his time at the Museum was spent in writing and delivering an occasional lecture for students of Oriental art and philosophy at New York University. Later he was given the higher post of "Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Mohammedan Art." During this period his scholarly works of philosophical, ethical and religious studies flowered into full bloom. It was now that he sought primarily to reveal what he had so long considered the common basis of Oriental and Occidental philosophic thought.

It was in England that he became interested in printing and the production of books. In 1908 while in England, he published his first book, a book which Dr. Andreas Nell holds as his best. This book, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, is a masterpiece not only of prose and assembling of material in an encyclopedic fashion but of excellent design. For this project was more than the mere writing of a text on Sinhalese decorative art; it is the expression of a creative artist masterfully presenting in all its refinements a work of art to be treasured by connoisseurs and scholars alike. This is the work of a man who has "arrived at the other shore." This is the work of a man who has caused

the East to stir and take inventory of its accumulated inherited cultures. *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* was the first of 500 publications to come from his pen.

Ananda Coomaraswamy, a poet as well, had as a good friend Eric Gill, whose simple and powerful illustrations did much to enhance pieces of Dr. Coomaraswamy's fine verse. Perhaps it was through his association with Eric Gill that Dr. Coomaraswamy became interested in drawing with the pen, pencil and brush; or perhaps it is even more logical that his interest in Rajput painting and drawing caused him to seek more understanding of drawing through the practice of the art of fine drawing itself. This may well be, for as the fine line drawings which he worked on during his period in Boston are masterpieces, they are more often in the Indian schools of Rajput drawing than in the Western manner which American and European artists have developed. His two volume *Yaksas* published by the Smithsonian Institute are filled with his careful drawings made from original sculpture in India.

Throughout his career he was keenly interested in photography and through friendship with such an eminent photographer as Alfred Stieglitz, Dr. Coomaraswamy reached a technical perfection as a fine photographer.

We have said much of Dr. Coomaraswamy's life in America was spent in Boston and Needham. It was not until after he had lived and worked in America for some time did he feel the need to be closer to nature. While he was living in New York, he was briefly interested in the American scene as we think of it today. Nevertheless he was much interested in the life and culture of the American negro. Much of his free time

would be spent in the negro districts of Boston and other eastern cities. It is no doubt the music of the negro as well as American folk music that attracted Coomaraswamy. This is most interesting for Coomaraswamy was trained as an engineer and a scientist, yet he was keenly alive and became completely possessed with the rhythms of primitive and exotic music. It is possible here to apply his philosophy that all forms of art are religious and thus art becomes "visual theology," implying that all genuine art is religious.

The wide range of his knowledge of literature (in original texts) both Occidental and Oriental was a vital factor in his developing the ability to embrace the whole of the secular and religious thought of both the east and the west (universal range of metaphysical thinking). He read Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhalese, Latin, Greek, German and French with the ease that we read English. His numerous translations are notable for their clarity and insight into meaning. Dr. Coomaraswamy points out that the modern conception of art has brought us to a point where man must choose between art and life. He points out "formerly and in Asia art was not an alternative to, but a means to life."⁴ He stressed that art is not an "expression of personality but a release from personality."

Dr. Coomaraswamy's important opinions on modern education somewhat parallel those on art. For example he says dealing with the subject of contemporary education, "Nowadays nothing is taught of self knowledge but only of ego knowledge and for Jung, this inflated ego was the root cause of the last war." He asks the question, "Why does a modern education isolate its victim?" And he goes on to say,

⁴In a letter to Margaret F. Marcus.



**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy (see arrow) at Wycliffe College.
(Photograph kindly given by Mr. Crofton E. Gane).**

"The isolation I speak of makes a modern man what Plato called a playboy interested in fine colors and sounds but ignorant of beauty." He goes on to define ignorance as "the disease of which the current crisis (war) is the symptom; the disease equally of contemporary Christianity and contemporary skepticism (between which there is not so much difference)."

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy spent less than a decade of his seventy years in his native land. This perhaps was as it should have been, for in America he was more able to fulfill his mission in the world as "scholar, curator and priest of Oriental art."

A CLASSMATE'S TRIBUTE

(*Mr. Crofton E. Gane, Bristol.*)

Ananda Coomaraswamy was respected by the boys of Wycliffe College partly on account of his scholastic ability but not less by his prowess in kicking up his leg level with or above his head.

He had his ordinary share of "teasing" by his schoolmates based in part on his being of different nationality and colour, and to arouse his ire which could only be done in safety when out of reach of his arms and legs. This was only in his first years at school when his temper was a very quick one.

A clear impression remains of his interest and proficiency in the Field Club excursions. Dr. Arthur Sibly led these to gravel beds where "Ammonites"—or similar insignificant terms labelled our findings for the School Science Show cases—here and beside the local streams Ananda gleaned and gleamed. He left school with the affectionate regard of his contemporaries who have followed his distinguished career with the greatest interest and little surprise.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(Mr. J. V. S. Wilkinson, Library, Baroda House,
London.)

I have, like everyone else who knew Dr. Coomaraswamy and his work, the highest admiration and respect for his character and talents. He was indeed a unique figure, and, I suppose, more than any man of his time, contributed to an understanding by the West (as well indeed as by the East) of Oriental thought and art. I only had infrequent correspondence with him in recent years, but he was invariably courteous and helpful, and never failed to shed new light on any problem about which I consulted him.

THE GENIUS

(Dr. F. L. Woodward, M.A. (Cantab.),
Rowella, Tasmania).

I first met Ananda Coomaraswamy in Ceylon, in 1904. He had then just been appointed Director of the Mineralogical Survey, financed by South Kensington Museum, London. He and his assistant, Mr. Parsons, used to travel all over the country in bullock carts, living for the most part in the jungle in their tents and carts, busied with the geology, gems and minerals of Ceylon. The son of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, an accomplished Sanskrit scholar and benefactor of the Ceylon Tamils, and an accomplished English lady, he had studied at London University, of which he was then B.Sc.

When not abroad in his cart he lived in a bungalow just outside Kandy with his wife, Ethel, herself an artist and German scholar; she was busy translating Dr. Geiger's *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*. I spent many pleasant days there. He was then occupied

THE PONAMBALAM BROTHERS

(Distinguished Cousins of Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy).



The Hon. Mr. Ponambalam
Coomaraswamy.



The Hon. Sir Ponambalam
Ramanathan, Kt., K.C.,
C.M.G.



The Hon. Sir Ponambalam
Arunachalam, Kt.

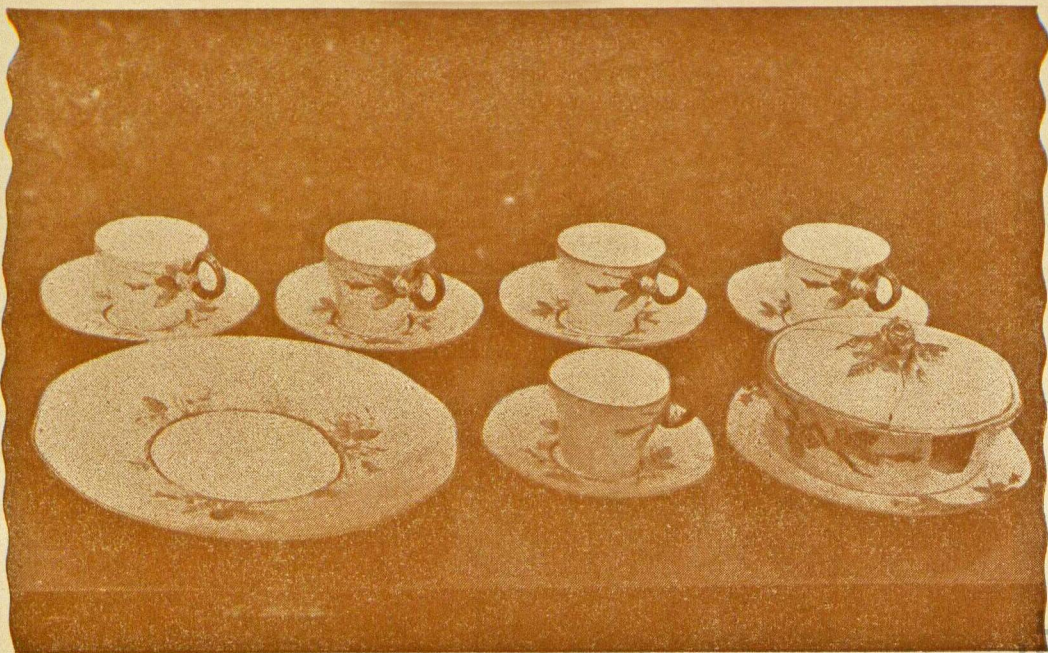
with his fine work on Ceylon *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, parts of which I remember reading, when he was typing it out as a *thesis* for his London Doctorate of Science. This he gained about 1905. Tall, of aquiline features and of distinguished bearing, he wore European clothes, but always with a turban.

In the years 1905-7 there was much talk in Ceylon of the necessity of dress reform and a return to ancient customs. A society was formed and a journal started, which, however, became the *Ceylon National Review*, in the editorship of which I joined him and Mr. W. A. de Silva. This journal was devoted to all aspects of national welfare in Ceylon. Later he thought and wrote of the proposed Ceylon University, and still later his cousin Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam started the *Ceylon University Journal*, with which also I was associated. Both Journals survived only a few years, and, as is the way in Ceylon, died natural deaths for want of support. He left Ceylon, I think, in 1907, since which time I never saw him, but have corresponded with him frequently during the following years, when he was director of the Oriental Art Department at the Boston Museum, U.S.A. When he left Ceylon for U.S.A. he was succeeded by Mr. Parsons who was unfortunately lost in the jungle at Nuwara Eliya, December 1909, at the same time as the famous disaster of Messina. His body was not discovered till some years later. He went to England with his wife and bought an ancient building at Campden, Gloucestershire, where he set up a printing-press, once used by the famous artist, William Morris, the Essex Press, where he turned out many volumes, his *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, *Thirty Indian Songs* etc. His range of intellect was wide. He was well acquainted

with Tamil and Sanskrit literature, though he did not claim to be a scholar in these languages, and was familiar with the classical languages of Europe. Though not himself a musician he had a complete understanding of the Indian modes of music, the symbology of the gestures of dancing women on which also he wrote a book. Before leaving the East he joined the Theosophical Society, of which Mrs. Annie Besant became President in 1907, she herself being keenly interested in the revival of Indian art and literature. After some years in England, busied with innumerable writings and printings, he went to Boston, U.S.A. as Director of the Oriental Art Department of the Museum, and this post he held till his death in 1947 at the age of seventy.

It would be impossible for me to enumerate the many books and articles he wrote during those years; he always sent me a copy. Latterly he spent much time over the Pali Scriptures, and, while modestly not claiming to be a Pali scholar, sent in many suggestions to the late Dr. C. A. Rhys Davids, and at the time of his death was busy with a volume of extracts from the *Tipitakas* together with Miss I. B. Horner, Secretary of the Pali Text Society.

He had no patience with the feeble imitations in modern art of ancient works, which can never be produced again. Their time has passed. One cannot step twice into the same stream. So also he would not allow of reconstruction of Gothic or other ancient buildings, holding with William Morris, whom he regarded as one of his masters, that one may prop up, repair and strengthen a building, *but never restore*. To conclude this brief record of this most distinguished son of Ceylon and England (for his gifted mother



Tea service presented to Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy by Lord Disraeli, now
with Mr. Sri Kanta Ponnambalam.

—*Studio Sun, Colombo*



was English) I will say that he was successful because he possessed the secret of developing what is called genius, the imperishable atom which records the *karma*, but which is powerless until developed. What is called 'genius' may be born with imagination, but no genius is born with knowledge. Knowledge can only be acquired in the ordinary way, by the power of intense concentration on what one is doing. This he had, whether designing a picture, copying a figure, printing a fine page or writing an article. Thus possessing by heredity on both sides a finely complex brain and, as we should say in the East, a rich *karmic* record of past lives, he, by this application, may be termed a genius. To think that a genius is 'heaven born' and steps forth in perfection is an error.

IN COOMARASWAMY EAST AND WEST MET TO THEIR GREAT MUTUAL ENRICHMENT

(*Rev. A. G. Fraser, M.A., Stirling, Scotland.*)

I first knew Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his early days in Ceylon, and thereafter kept in touch with his work and writings and we corresponded occasionally. We were both newcomers to Ceylon and to our work there when first we met, and our meetings were comparatively few as our work lay mainly in different parts of the island. But we enjoyed meeting and enjoyed agreeing and disagreeing.

Ananda Coomaraswamy was a brilliant talker and was deeply cultured. He had the courage of his convictions and feared no man. I remember when I was fiercely attacked in the newspapers he plunged into the fray in my defence. Ceylon owes him a deep debt of gratitude for the great work he did to pre-

serve her ancient monuments. He not only appreciated them but was able to awaken both peoples and government to their glory and their value. In him East and West met to their great mutual enrichment. His literary and artistic work and his exquisite printing will keep his work before the eyes of many generations.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(Dr. Hari Prasad Sastri, London.)

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy has placed India as a land of art and beauty on the art map of the world. His constructive appreciation of Indian literary and plastic art makes him perhaps the highest figure and a real son of India. He has exalted Indian art and literature to the most eminent position which it now occupies in the world. I know of no better work on Buddhism than his, I saw the other day in the British Museum and an English translation of a Persian poem by him, one of the best works I have seen on the subject. His modest living, his apathy to cheap fame, his eagerness to render justice where it is due, entitle him to a very high position. I wish every lover of Asiatic art to study Coomaraswamy's writings carefully. May his soul rest in peace.

A KARMA YOGI

(Dr. Lanka Sundaram M.A., Ph.D., New Delhi)

When in December 1946 I had the opportunity of meeting Ananda Coomaraswamy in Boston, I felt humbled in the presence of a great savant and *karma yogi*. To have had the privilege of conversing with him was to me something of a sacrament, and I had felt that my American tour would, even though I was

BURNING AND MELTING
BEING THE SZU-GUDAZ OF MU-
HAMMAD RIZA NAU'I OF KHABU-
SHAN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
BY MIRZA Y. DAWUD OF PERSIA
AND ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY
OF CEYLON

Photograph of cover of *Burning and
Melting*.



visiting that country in the name of my own, had become incomplete if this pilgrimage to Sage Ananda were not there. He and I appeared on the same public platform in Boston, and I can never forget the radiant spirit of a great soul which he showered on the assembled people. Ananda is in direct line of descent from the sages of *Bharat Varsha*, and in him India claimed a spiritual son, who, more than everyone else, interpreted her arts and architecture and culture to the Western world. Sage Ananda has now joined the Eternal, but his name and work will be remembered by one and all who ever care to think of India and her glorious cultural heritage and present contribution to the enrichment of Man.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(Capt. Anthony M. Ludovici, Suffolk, England).

The death of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy deprives the Indian people themselves of the greatest champion of their nationalist aims, and the civilized world at large of one of the most enlightened, persuasive and scholarly advocates of an aesthetic as opposed to a mass and machine-produced material culture. In both of these spheres he had shown himself consistent and convinced from the very first and, in one of his last brochures—*Why Exhibit Works of Art?* (1943)—made, I think, the most compelling appeal of all in favour of once more reconciling “work” with culture. The fact that for generations they had been divorced and that “work” is understood by the great majority of the populations of the West to mean something from which the worker has to recover by a

resort to "edifying," or at least relaxing, leisure pastimes, was a theme Coomaraswamy was never tired of expounding. But he expounded it with a much more formidable apparatus of knowledge and insight than did either Ruskin or Morris and, above all, with a much deeper understanding of what was at stake. For he saw, as no man before him had ever clearly seen, the imminent peril of a world situation in which the majority of common men know of no deeper incentive to their labours than the remuneration these secure them.

In the first decade of the century I knew Coomaraswamy well. We used often to meet and discuss the problems we each had at heart and, although we differed on certain fundamental matters, to one of which I shall allude, my artistic upbringing and leanings inclined me to accept at least his analysis of the essential wrongness of Western industry. Nor have I read any of his works which has not confirmed me in my general agreement with him on this subject. For he was no romantic reactionary, but a logical, cool and penetrating analyst of the subjects of which he made himself master. He was a tall, strikingly handsome man, with features decidedly Eastern, one in fact who could speak of beauty, as it were, by the right of an instinctive affinity. Owing to his mixed parentage (Indian father and English mother) he was not so dark as the average Indian and having the accent and demeanour of an Englishman, could be convincing on a London platform or in any company of Englishmen. Thanks to his command of Greek, Latin and Sanskrit, he was probably the greatest scholar of his age in the Scriptures of both East and West, and was therefore a formidable exponent of the philosophical and ontolo-

gical foundations of his cultural doctrines.

Educated as a scientist (he made the original Government geological survey of Ceylon) he soon, however, turned his attention wholly to aesthetics, and one of his principal services in this field was to make the art-treasures and art-principles of his Fatherland familiar both to the Western World and the Indian people. His contributions to the philosophy of art, despite the mass and distinction of his predecessors in the field, are original, profound and, in my view, uniquely important; whilst his successful attempt properly to place the artist in society, is indispensable to all who pretend to any grasp of sociological problems. For in Coomaraswamy, they will encounter no vagueness, no sentimentalizing, no merely nostalgic revivalism. Everything is clear-cut and wholly matter-of-fact. The artist's role, his function, his impulses, even his moral code, are all defined with the coolness and exactitude of a mathematician discoursing on the magnitudes of given bodies. But the reader feels the burning passion which could inspire such calm clarity; for only fire could have reduced to their elements the scattered and heterogeneous heaps of refuse which constitute Western aesthetics and the Western conception of the place of aesthetics in civilization. Coomaraswamy's last piece of writing—*Art, Man and Manufacture*—contributed to an interesting symposium on *Our Emergent Civilization*,* sums up and restates the fundamental principles for which he stood. But those who cannot get access to this book need not despair. In his other writings, most, if not all, of which are to be found in England,

*Harper & Brothers. New York, 1947. Demy 8vo pp. 321. Price, \$4.50.

they will be able to become acquainted with his considerable achievements in the special domain which he made his life's study.

By way of conclusion, I must mention, all too briefly I am afraid, one of the more fundamental matters on which I felt bound to differ from him. I should have pointed out above that, in his advocacy of Indian Nationalism, Coomaraswamy always argued strictly on purely cultural grounds. He expressly denied that the Nationalism he had in view had any basis in breeding and racial standardization. Nevertheless, he claimed emphatically that its prerequisite was what he termed the "re-establishment of a standard of quality." This position I attacked from the first, and for the following reasons:—

I never have believed that Man can express what he is not. His expression, whether in Art, or any other individual utterances, is always the externalization of what is in him. If there is not quality in him, therefore, it is futile to expect quality in what he expresses. To recover or re-establish quality in Man's expressions of himself, he must first be re-born as a psycho-physical organism possessing quality. Thus I ascribe the Brummagem wares of Western industry, so deeply offensive to Coomaraswamy, not to any extraneous influences, whether economic, scientific, moral or political, but to the fact that Western mankind long ago became biological Brummagem; therefore, that their natural expression could not, in any case, be other than shoddy and devoid of the quality Coomaraswamy sought for in vain. Similarly, if it is essential, for the recovery of Indian Nationalism, that "a re-establishment of a standard of quality" should be effected I claim that it is idle to work or agitate or reform with

this end in view by hortatory and educational means alone. Not until you have made a population something more than biological Brummagem will you eliminate shoddy from its life.

But this objection to Coomaraswamy's doctrines, although fundamental, leaves his penetrating analysis of the artist and his function in society wholly unscathed, and it is by this analysis and the teaching that arises out of it that the brilliant subject of this brief and inadequate appreciation is likely to be known and valued by an enlightened posterity.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY AND THE PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS

(*Mr. Thomas Derrick, Coldash, Berkshire England.*)

Ananda Coomaraswamy, with the blood both of Europe and of Asia flowing in his veins, devoted his life to excavating the wisdom of the ages as he found it submerged and forgotten. He found it in Asia: he found it in Classical Greece; and he found it in Historic Christendom and the Fathers of the Church. Two books* recently published he would commend, not because they were compiled to do him honour, but so far as they may cause men to turn again to the *Philosophia Perennis*.

One, in the English language, comes from Asia. The other is published in England and America. This is as it should be, for Coomaraswamy was as detached from mere geography and as apart from Time as the

* *A Garland of Tributes*: Kuantan, Malaya. Edited by S. Durai Raja Singam.
Art and Thought. A Volume in honour of the late Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy; Edited by K. Bharatha Iyer.

Truth that he ministered. He built bridges across the centuries as he built them between nations and races, for his concern was with something detached from both, referred to by St. Augustine as "Wisdom that was not made, but is now what it always was and ever shall be."

Both works he saw, although uncompleted, on the occasion of his 70th birthday, August 22nd 1947. He died on the September 9th following, at Boston, in America, too soon for his intended last return to India. The first work consists of a vast mass of testimony to the man and his achievement, from all sorts of people, many of India, but also of England and America. It tells much about his life, his origins, and the immense range of his studies. The other consists of forty contributions by scholars of both East and West, writing upon the traditional Art and Thought of India, China, Tibet, Babylonia, Persia and Europe; of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian and Islamic Civilisations in all their varied aspects.

So far as Coomaraswamy's name is known in England, it will probably be as a writer upon Art. He has even been referred to as an Art Critic. But this is to suggest a most restricted view of both the nature and range of his activities. He wrote of the traditional or "normal" view of art and of the life and work of Man in the World, with which, art he would say has "normally" been integrated, a view which has been accepted from pre-historic times until yesterday, until that is, the last two centuries of Humanism and the "technological" society we know to-day; which society he indicted as an outrage upon the nature and dignity of Man, involving a sub-human existence, insofar as that tradition has been lost. He endorses

Ruskin's dictum that industry without art is brutality; would approve Lethaby's definition of art as the right way of doing necessary work, and also his use of the word when he bracketed the "arts" of agriculture and architecture as changing the surface of the world. But the Art-critic as ordinarily understood, does not include agriculture within his purview. He is concerned with Art considered exclusively from the aesthetic angle, as a "luxury product" segregated in a "Gallery," so as to be "appreciated" in hours of "leisure." This is the view of the little girl quoted recently in the *New English Weekly* as saying that "she liked poetry because she liked the taste of nice words in her mouth." She also no doubt, likes chocolates, and for the same reason. And her father, most probably, inherits and accepts without question this view; which is of art as purely a matter of aesthetics and within a category entirely separated from work and the production of utilities, although he might concede some importance to the "application of Art to Industry" by aesthetic specialists trained in an "Art School," as their species of cosmetics might make the article more "saleable," saleability providing the ultimate standard. Thus do we seek to emulate the qualities of the ancient exhibit in the Art Museum! Such exhibits the spectator commonly assumes to be of necessity rare and costly, and entirely useless apart from their aesthetic qualities. Hitherto, he would reflect, their enjoyment has been the exclusive prerogative of the wealthy collector and connoisseur; but now, through the institution of public galleries and museums, such enjoyment has been made available to all. But the forced labour by which he himself lives, he regards as in the nature of things, from which his

leisure activities (exhibitions of Art being gone) provide an amelioration. He does not feel deprived as a worker. Art, which he may have been taught at school to "appreciate," he sees as a matter of play-hours, and not of work-hours; just as his daughter does not expect to eat chocolates in classtime. It is a very superior department of the "Entertainment Industry" coming within the category of "culture." It is "Third Programme." Towards it he remains, and is completely resigned to remaining, a spectator. But to Coomaraswamy, as he said repeatedly, "the artist is not a particular sort of man, but every man is a particular sort of artist."

That is the exact contrary of the current view of the artist as a peculiarly gifted man deserving special privileges, which must include complete "freedom," to enable him to enrich society by his self-revelation which may require explanation by experts, since it derives from mysterious psychological powers vested in a highly exceptional man. Nobody would regard the Pottery that emanates from Senor Picasso's studio as pots and pans for use. They are Art; and are intended for contemplation. The same applies to the objects in the Art Museum. They are not regarded as a normal response by ordinary workmen to the work-a-day requirements of neighbours; made for the Market Place—and not for the Sale Room: for ordinary use—and not for the Art Collection. Yet that is what they were. The men who built the village of West Wycombe in Buckinghamshire were without aesthetic obsession, and did not work according to personal inspiration, but according to the traditions of their various trades, for people much like themselves, with no special training in or preten-

sion to "good taste." We owe it to the initiative of the Royal Society of Arts that the entire village is now vested in the National Trust, which is itself evidence of our admission that something has been lost from ordinary working life, or it would not be thought necessary to preserve its traces. From such a life, the practice of what we call the "Fine" arts has not hitherto differed essentially. They are also the response of responsible workmen, but to the more complex requirements of wealthier patrons. The portraits of Velasquez were painted as a part of the necessary paraphernalia of the Spanish Court, as were the triumphal arches which he designed in honour of Royal Visitors. His picture of "The Surrender of Breda" was not conceived as an exercise in aesthetics, but to serve a practical purpose as a visible memorial to Spanish chivalry, and a particular achievement of Spanish arms, executed by a master of his trade, and possessing the devotion to his trade necessary for him to attain to mastery; using the word "trade," of course, in the traditional sense of "calling" or "vocation," and not of mere trafficking. The family portraits by Reynolds or Sir Thomas Lawrence were a part of the furnishing of the life of the hereditary English landed gentry; and were required to be of dimensions proportionate to the houses in which they were to hang. They did not begin as aesthetics any more than did Chippendale's chairs, intended primarily to be sat upon. They were made with art, which is to say with skill, just as were the other furnishings of English country mansions, or of English country cottages. It was for those of a later generation to devise a system under which art and work are disassociated, in which the words "trade"

and "master" have come to have entirely different meanings, and whose standards are quantitative and commercial. The disappearance of the craftsman—the fully and personally responsible workman—continues. Even the domestic arts decline as women are absorbed into "Industry," and may be deprived of their chosen vocation as their children are handed over to the officials of the municipal creche. The word "vocation" may still be heard as applied to the priest, but rarely in regard to anybody else. As industrial organisation becomes more impersonal and mechanical, and consequently—from the quantitative angle—more "efficient," less and less is demanded of the mass of men. As processes become more and more "fool-proof" any fool can operate them—as is intended. This alone is enough to account for the strains and dislocations of contemporary industrial life. Hence the ennui. Hence the demand for shorter and shorter working hours, with no clear idea of how the hours of leisure are to be spent, and the consequent search for external distraction and bemusement provided by an "Entertainment Industry" and the contemplation of other peoples "culture." Where in England Samuel Pepys found a "nest of singing birds," to-day he would find a "loud-speaker."

To his survey of the contemporary scene Coomaraswamy brought an immense erudition that covered the great cultural periods of all the lands he visited in the course of the world-wide travel called for by the nature of his activities. Yet in regard to it he made no claim to propound any views of his own, except so far as he had adopted them. These were, he claimed, intrinsic to the *Philosophia Perennis*, which can be recognised wherever it has not been



House at Mutuwal now owned by Messrs. Walker Sons Ltd. where Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy was born.—Studio Sun, Colombo.



"Rheinland," the house where Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy was born is now demolished—now it is "Rheinland Terrace" a built up area of modern houses.—Studio Sun, Colombo.



Bungalow now occupied by Mr. Donald Obeysekera where Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy's grandmother died. The house has seen extensive additions and renovations by Mr. Obeysekera. It is at Rajagiriya and stands on over 50 acres of land.—Studio Sun, Colombo.

forgotten. Characteristically he renounced any claim to "copyright" in his writing, for what he sought to convey, he said, was not personal, but inherited and universal; "only the logical deductions of a lifetime spent in the handling of works of art, the observation of men at work, and the study of the universal philosophy of art from which our own 'aesthetic' is only a temporary provincial aberration."

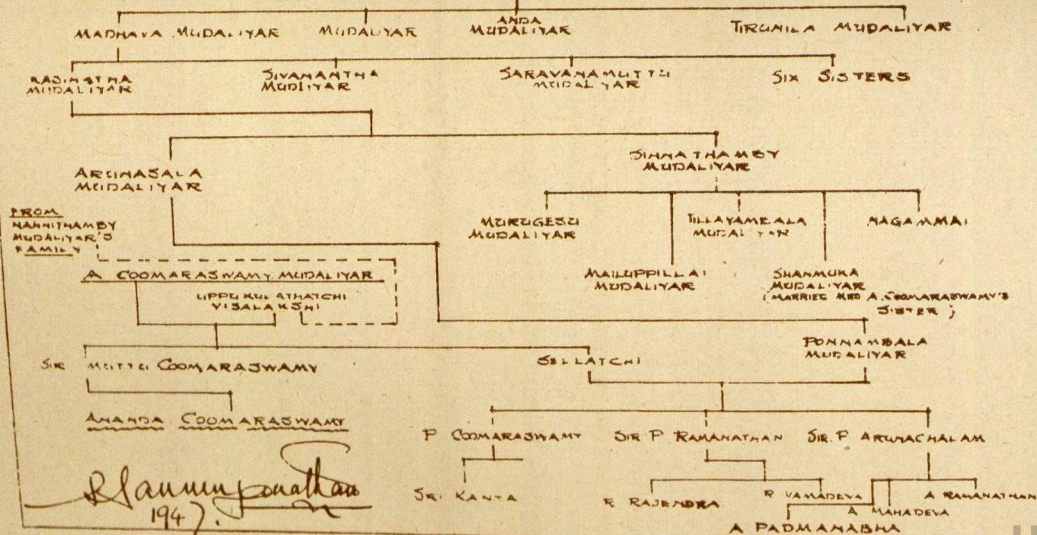
THE SCHOLAR BORN OF THE EAST

(Sri S. Durai Raja Singam, Kuantan, Malaya.)

For me, as for several of his admirers throughout the world, the 9th of September, 1947, will always be pregnant with a sense of personal loss, for on that day Gurudev Ananda K. Coomaraswamy passed away. I shall not be guilty of emotional exaggeration when I say that, on receiving the sad news, I felt as though something had gone out of me. I have been a staunch admirer of this great savant in my humble obscurity as a schoolmaster and my one regret is that I did not know him earlier through his works, to which I owe such a wealth of spiritual buoyancy. There are three reasons for which Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy possesses me—he is the greatest expounder of Oriental art and philosophy, the ambassador of understanding between East and West and he is my countryman. Gurudev Ananda Coomaraswamy hailed from Jaffna, the son of the distinguished Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy and an English mother Elizabeth Clay Beeby and I would not be human if I did not feel a certain pride in the fact that he came from the same part of the country as I though of course he belongs not only to Ceylon and India but also to the whole world.

Born on August 22nd 1877, he was educated at Wycliffe College and the University of London, specializing largely in Science. In 1903 he was Director of Mineralogical Survey for Ceylon but a few years later turned to Indian internal affairs to initiate a movement towards a national education system for India. In support of his effort he founded and was President of the Ceylon Social Reform Society and edited the *Ceylon National Review*. When Ceylon was trying to become wholly westernised and was belittling everything Indian he had come to the forefront to stem the tide of degeneration. He then directed his tremendous powers of concentration and learning to the arts and in 1910-1911 he was placed in charge of the art section of the United Provinces Exhibition in Allahabad, India. Six years later he joined the staff of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to begin the most productive period of his career. Side by side with his museum work, he contributed much in the world of letters. He was a Fellow of the British Geological and Linnean Societies, and the University College of London, a founder and Vice-President of the Royal India Society of London, honorary member of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of India. He also received honorary degrees from the Universities of London, New York and Ceylon as well as high recognition from learned societies of three continents. He was a prolific writer and author of several publications all of which have received respectful attention. The world, however, will assess him impersonally as a master-mind in his sphere, an eloquent speaker and a choice author of over six hundred publications on Eastern art against its religious and philosophic background in more languages than one As a prolific

FAMILY TREE OF ANANDA COOMARASWAMY
LOKHANADA MUDALIYAR OF MANIPAL



Family Tree of Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy—Drawn by
Sri S. Sanmuganathan, Colombo.



writer, none perhaps realized better than he the truth in the Roman saying *ars longa, vita brevis*; and a clue to the real inner Ananda Coomaraswamy may be found in the words he wrote to me: "I have enough work in hand for another life-time."

The debt to him of India and Ceylon lies perhaps in the fact that, by his profound insight and recognition of relative merits he turned the tide of servile adulation for all things Western even in matters of art and spiritual development, in which the East, he stoutly maintains, is not inferior to the West. He rescued Eastern art from the obloquy of antiquity as objects fit only for preservation for eyes in a museum by initiating its true renaissance in his mother country and other Eastern countries bound to it by cultural affinities. Indeed, he re-discovered for many the India of the ages and unfolded her variegated and classic cultural patterns from time immemorial. No Indian has ever touched upon nobler themes from India's art, history and civilization than Ananda Coomaraswamy. What Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said of Swami Vivekananda is equally applicable to Ananda Coomaraswamy. "Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, he was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and the present."

True to ancient Indian tradition, he was for the last thirty years an emissary of Eastern culture to the West unfolding as he did during his life time, the wisdom of saints and philosophers from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Taoism. Nor was he merely extensive in his erudition to the point of Catholicism. His work the outcome of dedicating a life-time to cultural matters, embraces art, music,

drama, mysticism and folklore of the East, all of which he had explored extensively to the full in his works. And on these he ever brought to bear Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas and also the religious texts and thought of India, China and other lands of the East. He is in short a towering beacon in his sphere, writing for the select cultured minds of the world. Romain Rolland in his Introduction to the French edition of the *Dance of Shiva*, says: "Ananda Coomaraswamy is one of those greatest Hindus who nourished, like Tagore, on the culture of Europe and Asia and justifiably proud of their splendid civilization, have conceived the task of working for Eastern and Western thought for the good of humanity." Dr. Langdon Warner of Harvard University pays tribute to Ananda Coomaraswamy's being in advance of the times—a true signal of all geniuses. In a letter to the writer he states: "It is my belief that our true debt to Ananda Coomaraswamy will not be appreciated during his life-time and that a century may elapse before art, critics and historians of religion and philosophers will turn to his writings for source material."

And now death has claimed him for his own, incredible and stupefying though it is because of his endearment to his admirers. Yet only a few months ago, one could recall, he was being lionized as a savant on his 70th birthday by well-wishers in America, England, India, Ceylon and other parts of the world. Dinners were held in celebration of the occasion, festchrights presented and his portrait unveiled at the King George V Hall of the Ceylon University. He had been all in all thirty years a Research Fellow in Indian, Persian and Mohammedan Art at

the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Museum Officials, who described him as "one of the greatest scholars in his field" admitted that under his direction Eastern, Indian and Persian collections at the museum have become the most important in the world. He was an exceptional linguist who spoke even Icelandic. Dr. Coomaraswamy was aided greatly in building up the museum's outstanding collection of Far Eastern art through his ability to communicate to people in many lands in their own languages.

Throughout his life he searched the Scriptures of all men in order to better his own, and always for his own need to understand what there was to learn "here." This led to his enormous work, from articles a few pages to large books and the number of titles he wrote are somewhat over 650. "Other men" he used to say, "will read these writings, but I hope they shall not think of me as something novel."

Everyday of his life he grew wiser and gentler, everyday far away from his own land he became more Indian and more orthodox, he was brought to think this way by the very logic his scientific training gave him and because he took his learning to its roots, and was not satisfied with the surfaces alone. He said over and over, "I am indebted to every thinker and philosopher and considered the TRUTH no matter what part of the world they stem from." He was as completely selfless a man as one could imagine, and praise of any sort would make him very shy. Perhaps he detested above all things *aham*. From a human interest I asked him once to write his autobiography and he replied, "I have enough work in view that I could complete in another lifetime. The wisdom of India should have taught you that portraiture of

human beings is *asvargaya*. All this is not a matter of modesty but one of principle."

Tall, well over six feet, he had a large head with beautiful deep set eyes, an aquiline nose, a mouth denoting at the same time a keen sense of humour and a great kindness and his demeanour was entirely amiable and friendly. He was not only one of the greatest scholars in the world but combined also the gift of a most profound mind with those of a keen spiritual insight and a highly religious attitude towards life and human beings. Although he spent his days in the splendid Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, he loved beauty and *rasa* of the Divine presence it carries with it, that his own home was another museum full of beautiful paintings, sculpture and art objects mostly from his beloved India. His contention was that the motion produced in the soul by the sentiment of beauty in objects is one of the most immediate avenues of communion with the Divine Reality which is upholding all beings into Beings; and as he did not recognise a cleavage between the artist and the artisan, he considered that a beautiful teapot or a beautiful scarf was quite capable of awakening the eyes of the soul as any other object of beauty.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's death though at the age of three score and ten, is a veritable irony of fate, for it was in his mind to retire from his post and live simply near the Himalayas for the remainder of his life in a mode approximating as far as possible to the *Vanaprastha* (forest - dwelling) — idea of Indian sages. The writer wrote to him to inquire if he would revisit India and Ceylon in the near future as there were many anxious to have his *darshan* and he

I have the highest respect for Mahatma Gandhi's work in this field. ~~He has~~ By his advocacy of satyagraha he is reminding India of one of her most ancient ideals and is not only a teacher for India but a jagat-guru,

But non-violence, as he also knows, is not merely a matter of refraining from visibly violent actions; it is a matter of making peace with our Selves, one of learning to obey our Inner Man; for none but the outer man, a ego, is aggressive.

Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's reply to the question, "What is your tribute to Gandhiji for achieving freedom through non-violence?"

(In a letter to Sri S. Durai Raja Singam).



replied: "My wife and I are returning to live in Northern India for the rest of our lives. This will be by the end of 1948. We mean to live in *retirement*. I shall not take part in any public functions or affairs whatever but individuals who wish to do so will be free to visit us."

The most lovable characteristic of Dr. Coomaraswamy is his complete affability. On Indian Independence Day he saw the fulfilment of a cherished dream of his and when I asked for his message to New India he wrote to me on the 15th of August 1947 (Independence Day) the following:—"Be yourself. Follow Mahatma Gandhi, Bharatan Kumarappa, D. V. Gundappa, Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Gaffar Khan and Sri Ramana Maharishi. Co-operate with such men as the Earl of Portsmouth, George Bourne, Wilfred Wellock, Jean Giono, Fernando Nobre. Why consider the inferior philosophers? Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

When he was asked what tribute he paid to Gandhiji for having achieved freedom through Non-violence, he wrote: "*I have the highest respect for Mahatma Gandhi's work in this field. By his advocacy of Satyagraha he reminded India of her most ancient ideals and is not only a teacher for India but a Jagat-Guru. But non-violence, as he also knows, is not merely a matter of refraining from visibly violent actions, it is a matter of making peace with ourselves, one of learning to obey our inner man, for none but the outer man or ego is aggressive.*" Like all great men, Dr. Coomaraswamy was a citizen of the world untrammelled by narrow nationalist bonds and ever encouraged cultural intercourse to bridge the chasm of ethnocentrism in our modern world. This is what he



advocates succinctly to strengthen the ties of India and Ceylon: "In the educational field, exchange professorships and studentships. Politically, alliance for common defence." Similarly, the affinity and understanding of a once common Hindu heritage, he opined, could be fostered between India and Java, Bali, Malaya, Siam, Cambodia and Ceylon. In addition he suggested the establishment of chairs of India's cultural history in wider aspects and renewed contacts as contemplated at the first All-Asia Conference. The above are some of the treasured extracts from a letter which he wrote to me a few weeks before his death. He saw his dream of FREE INDIA fulfilled. It is a pity that we have been deprived of his valuable guidance when it is most needed in the nation's cultural endeavours in the next few years that will be eventful in *Gandhi's East*, a term so beautifully coined by Dr. Coomaraswamy. When the full story of *Gandhi's East* is written the historians will not forget Ananda Coomaraswamy. To-day in India when the country has just celebrated its deliverance, when the 'finale' has just been written by Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders to the beautiful allegory of *Mata Bharat* which Coomaraswamy wrote in his *Essays in National Idealism* it is but right that we keep alive his memory rather than remember vaguely of the numerous services rendered by "myriad-minded" Coomaraswamy for the cause of our culture and artistic revival.

How best can his memory be perpetuated now that he is gone? Perhaps leaders of India and Ceylon will keep alive his memory in some suitable form. Perhaps some day a fitting memorial in the form of a Coomaraswamy Cultural Centre will be established by

a grateful generation of admirers in this land or may it not be wise for us Indians and Ceylonese to establish a Coomaraswamy Chair of Eastern Religions and Philosophy at one of our Universities. Will not our wealthy philanthropists award Coomaraswamy Gold Medals to research students in the field of Asian history and culture at our universities in India, Ceylon and Malaya?

DR. A. K. COOMARASWAMY HAD WORK PLANNED FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

(Mr. Robert Paul Dars, Boston, U.S.A.)

In the death of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, the Museum of Fine Arts with which he was so long a distinguished member of its Asiatic staff, lost one of its brilliant scholars. Under his guidance and discernment the magnificent collections of Indian and Persian Arts were assembled and catalogued.

His real achievement, however, was his untiring effort in bringing to the attention of the modern world of letters, through his interpretation, the thoughts of the great truth seekers of the past, both of the East and West. It was his desire to place before the Occidental world the glories of the teachings of the East, stressing the accomplishments of Indian culture. It was his claim that though the apparent differences between the basic ideas of the Occident and Orient seemed unsurmountable, the essentials and the truths which they both proclaimed were the same; as truth is truth which neither time nor place can change. He was indefatigable in his work. He wrote without hesitancy and did practically all his writing directly on the typewriter. His

mind functioned with rapidity and clearness and his ability to select words that would express the desired shades of meaning was astounding. He once told me that he had work planned for the next one hundred years. He had little use for the so-called "civilization" of the West. He abhorred the "factory" system of the present-day world with its deadening pace. To him every worker should create for the joy of creating. The object made could not be divorced from its maker. Mass production stifled all individual creative effort. He fought against the invasion of our modern machine age into the countries of the Orient. The early and disciplined craftsmanship was his ideal. It led to a creative development and gave direction point and purpose to living. He believed that every man should work for the delight of working otherwise he became a slave eking out a mere existence.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was ever willing to aid a student in the quest of learning. He was always ready to explain in great detail an answer to a question which was asked with a sincere desire for knowledge. He was the champion of all culture and thought. His entire life was dedicated to the explanation of truth as exemplified in symbol and the written word. His scholarship, as shown by his voluminous writings, will always speak for itself.

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

Esse Omnium Est Superesse Divinitas

(Dr. Ruth Nanda Anshen, Ph. D., New York).

"As one embraced by a darling bride knows naught of "I" and "Thou," so self embraced by the foreknowing (solar) Self knows naught of a "myself" within or

a "thyself" without. It is this Self that the man who really loves himself or others, loves in himself and in them; all things are dear only for the sake of the Self. In this true love of Self the distinction of selfishness from altruism loses all its meaning. He sees the Self, the Lord, alike in all beings, and all beings alike in that Lordly Self. "Loving thy Self," in the words of Meister Eckhart, "thou lovest all men as thy Self." All these doctrines coincide with the Sufi. "What is love? Thou shalt know when thou becomest me."

Such may be said to be the epitome of the metaphysics of Ananda Commaraswamy. Through his words we find the meaning of *logos* and *eros*. Sombart has said that the erotic and the ontologic man is dead. Coomaraswamy has helped to return him to life. He has revived the erotological man, and has pointed to the deep strength of the truth, even as Eckhart has, that: "I must go down unto Eternal Death and Annihilation lest the Last Judgment come and find me Unannihilate and I be seized and given into the hands of my own selfhood."

Coomaraswamy was profoundly cognizant with Plato and Plotinus that the enunciation of abstract principles and doctrines is not sufficient. He emphasized again and again that abstract principles and doctrines only engender validity when they are suffused with the implicit suggestion of the concrete unity of experience whereby every abstract entity obtains its vigor and vitality. He pointed to the fallacy of Leibnitz in embracing the necessity of finite monads based upon a substratum of deistic infinitude, showing the limitation in Leibnitz' thought in not recognizing that infinitude is mere vacancy

apart from its embodiment of finite values. For the notion of understanding requires some grasp of how the finitude of the entity in question requires infinity, and also some notion of how infinity requires finitude. Coomaraswamy was cognizant of a deep metaphysical truth; the truth that Buddhism in emphasizing the sheer infinity of the divine principle robbed its practical influence of energetic, originative values and activity, and he pointed to the equal truth that Christianity, on the other hand, in pragmatizing the spirit, compelled it to congeal in the pitiless lava of the phenomena, while in postulating the immortality of the soul condemned it to a relativism on earth and bestowed upon *caritas* its inevitable denigration into *cupiditas*.

The significance of Coomaraswamy's thought lies in his idea of existence. Abstraction involves emphasis, and emphasis vivifies experience, for good, or for evil. All characteristics peculiar to actualities are modes of emphasis whereby finitude vivifies the infinite. In this way creativity involves the production of value—experience, by the inflow from the infinite into the finite, deriving special character from the details and the totality of the finite pattern. This is the abstraction involved in the creation of any actuality, with its union of finitude with infinity. But Coomaraswamy declared that consciousness proceeds to a second order of abstraction whereby finite constituents of the actual thing are abstracted from that thing, this procedure being indispensable for finite thought.

In applying this principle to the problem of gradation and evolution, Coomaraswamy's analysis is invaluable. He refutes the Hegelian interpretation of

progress with its panlogism and its attempt to embrace within its own law all experience under the aegis of reason. He abrogates the doctrine of a creation "in the beginning" and that of the gradual development of new species as being irreconcilable with each other. These two propositions are doubtless incompatible if the mystical account is to be interpreted historically. The serious mythologist, however, is well aware that to interpret myth as factual history is to mistake the genre; and that a myth can only be called "true" when time and place are abstracted. If the doctrine of special creation is understood as it has generally been interpreted by Christian and other philosophers, then gradation and evolution are not irreconcilable alternatives, but only different ways, respectively ideal and historical, formal and figurative, algebraic and arithmetical, or describing one and the same thing.

In these philosophies causality is taken for granted; nothing happens by chance. The impossible never happens; what takes place is always the realization of a possibility. But we have to take account of two orders of causes, one, a First Cause, in which the possibilities inhere, and, two, Mediate Causes, by which the conditions are provided in which the possible becomes the necessary. The First Cause of the existence of things, or in other words their possibility, is often called "God," but also "Being," "Life," or "Nature" (*natura naturans*). This First Cause, whether philosophically "absolute" or mythically "personified," is the direct cause of the being of things, but only indirectly of the manner of their being. The manner of their being (according to which they are distinguished as species) is determined by the Mediate



Causes, known or unknown, of which the result is the production of the given species or individual at a given time or place. The category of Mediate Causes does not exclude any of those forces or tendencies or determining accidents on which the evolutionist relies as explanations of the observed series; if he differs from the philosopher in ignoring a First Cause, it is because he is not discussing the origin of life, but only its variety. Also, if by "in the beginning" we understand an operation completed at a given moment, i.e., at the beginning of time itself, then of course gradation and evolution become incompatible concepts. As to this "beginning," it must of course be realized that, as St. Augustine declares, the question, What was God doing before he created the world, is meaningless; or to say the same thing in other words, that a succession of events in the eternal now (of which empirical experience is impossible) is as inconceivable as the notion of a locomotion in the Infinite. What our philosophers actually understand by "in the beginning" is a logical and not a temporal priority. So Coomaraswamy, following Meister Eckhart, shows that "God is creating the whole world *now*, this instant," and, faithful to Jacob Boehme, points out that "it is an everlasting beginning." Referring to the Rgveda, Coomaraswamy reiterated, "this creation cannot be regarded as a single definite act: it is regarded as ever proceeding." This does not mean that it is unfinished in *principio* and *ex tempore*, but that it is apprehended by ourselves as a temporal sequence and *as if* cause and effect could be separated from one another by sensible periods. Coomaraswamy quotes Philo when he declares that "at that time,

indeed, all things took place simultaneously.....but a sequence was necessarily written into the narrative from one another,”—just as it is necessarily written into the evolutionist’s narrative; for what Gradation states *sub specie aeternitatis*, the Myth relates *sub specie aeviternitatis*, and History *sub species temporis*. “What is rooted in the nature of the All is, in the Myth, figurately treated as coming into being by generation and creation: stage and sequence are transferred, for clarity of exposition, to things whose being and definite form are eternal.” (Plotinus, *Enneads* IV. 8.4.) The validity of Coomaraswamy’s position is an echo of the *Mathnawi* of Rumi II. 970, where one reads, “The beginning which is thought, comes to an end in action; know that in such wise was the construction of the world in eternity.” And finally Coomaraswamy’s argument may be consummated by a line from Dante’s *Paradiso*, XXIX 20-1, *Nè prima nè poscia procedette lo discorrer di Dio sopra quest “acque.”*

The concepts, then, on the one hand of the eternal and ideal pattern or “intelligible world,” unextended in space and time, and on the other of a temporal and “sensible world” extended in space and time as an echo, reflection or imitation of the other, are not alternative, but correlative. Each implies the other; the uniformity of the intelligible world is in every way compatible with the multiformity of its manifestations. A real conflict of science with religion is unimaginable; the actual conflicts are always of scientists ignorant of religious philosophy with fundamentalists who maintain that the truth of their myth is historical.

The problem of the “Self”, the Self which has

suffered so much denigration at the hands of the pragmatist, empiricist and Freudian degenerating into a mere solipsism, an oscillation between the *ding an sich* and the *être pour moi*, a *pro ratione* voluntas without principles and without norms, has occupied almost the center of Coomaraswamy's thought. *Metanoëisai* means to come to an understanding *with*. The word "with" must be stressed because in order to grasp the problems involved it is essential to remember that all words containing the prepositions *co* or *con*, *sum* *sun*, and all such terms as self-control, "self-government," and "self-possession" (*com-posure*), imply a relation between *two* things which are in the final analysis respectively human and divine. In this respect Coomaraswamy is an orthodox Platonist for Plato himself makes an analogous observation in the *Republic*, 431A, B, 436B. When you are rid of self, then you are Self-controlled and when Self-controlled, you are Self-possessed and when Self-possessed, then you are possessed of God and all that he has ever made. All this implies "to be together with" and "to come together with," which in turn implies *con-gress* and unification, a "becoming one" in the erotic no less than in other senses even as *telos* means to be perfected, to marry or to die.

In other words, the great comprehension is a kind of synthesis and agreement by which our internal conflict is resolved or, as the Sanskrit texts point out, in which "all the knots of the heart are loosed." If we were to ask, an agreement of what with what? the answer would be evident: unanimity *homonoia* of the worse and the better, human and divine parts of us, as to which should rule. It is the command to us made by Plato: the assimilation of the knower with

the to-be-known, in accordance with the archetypal nature, and coming to be in this likeness, which likeness now begins again to be formed in us.

Coomaraswamy, committed as he is to the intrinsic organicity of man and the cosmos, finds no contradiction but rather vital analogical references among various philosophies, whether of East or West, whether ancient or modern, that embrace this organic unity. He quotes Plato again and again declaring with him that "when the two parts of the mortal soul have been calmed and the third part of the soul is so moved that we are of one mind with our real Self, we thus obtain true knowledge in the stead of our opinion." (Republic 571, 572). In terms of Indian philosophy this is for Coomaraswamy also the marital agreement, or unanimity of the elemental self with the prescient solar spirit in a union transcending the consciousness of a within or without; or as he himself says, "the fusion of the Outer King with the Inner Sage, the *Regnum* with the *Sacerdotium*."

When Parmenides declares that to be and to know are one and the same; when we read in the Upanishads that we come to be of just such stuff as that on which the mind is set; when we are reminded by St. Paul in the Ephesians that we must be renewed in the spirit of the mind; then we embrace with Coomaraswamy the truth that to repent is to become another and a new man, and that this transformation is a transformation of one's whole being from human to divine understanding, from paranoia to metanoia.

The sagacity of Coomaraswamy is not eclipsed by his erudition. Neither has he abrogated his right to be called a man. He has not repudiated his humanity. In his metaphysics we discern the possi-

bility of finding oneself ultimately in the presence of an Ideal Judge who knows all Good and Evil. The world as we approached it seemed so restless, so disheartening, without teleological significance. The world of our postulates was a brighter one only because we determined to make it so. But there was something lonely and isolated in the thought that the postulates received, as a response from the world of reality, only their own echo—and often not even that. Their world was rather their own creation than a universal truth that gave them independent substance and support. Frequently there seemed to be nothing solid that could reverberate at all. But Coomaraswamy has shown us that we may look upon a truth that is indeed not dependent on any subjective longings, on whims of social tradition, on demands of our personal narrow lives. Indeed, what is a mind that feeds upon itself? It is empty. The real function of the human mind is not to describe things as it sees them, but as they are. Either we shall be free from things, and slaves to our minds, or free from our minds because submitted to things, or rather to the intelligible truth which is embodied in them and akin to our mind.

Man is not isolated although in him alone the life current overcomes resistance that elsewhere has arrested its advance. Yet he is different; for in him we find no limit set to that advance nor do we see any resistance that shall bring it to an end, not even, perhaps, the barrier of death. An implacable law decrees that spirit must encounter the resistance of matter, that life cannot advance without bruising that which lives, and that great moral results are purchased by blood and tears. But for Coomaraswamy

humanity is saved in the midst of material suffering or material pleasure from moral downfall while the people appealing in their desolation to the heroism of love and to the unity of the finite with the infinite, raise on high the paean of deliverance from the depths of ruin and of grief. To the force which feeds only on its own brutality Coomaraswamy opposes that which seeks above and within itself a principle of life and renovation. While the one is gradually spending itself, the other is continually remaking itself, and reveals to us our creative power in a life that has become our own—a life we guide and determine towards the fulfillment of our destiny. To Coomaraswamy we owe an everlasting debt of gratitude, gratitude for the reassurance that the life of the spirit is not dead, and that infinity fecundated by finitude will ultimately breathe into us the knowledge of our just place in the cosmos, a place somewhat less anthropomorphic than it has been considered but not reducing our dignity and that will lead as unwavering through the valley of the shadow.

For Nature can only be viewed as a domain of multiple actual occasions in process. Each of these occasions comes to be in an indivisible stretch of time, by making internal to itself, in a creative act, all that lies beyond it in the universe. Nothing is simply located here and not in some sense also there. But just what meaning the universe has for a particular occasion, only that occasion can decide as it comes to be, after which it perishes, though not without acquiring a kind of immortality in nature and in God. This metaphysics unites notions which modern thought has commonly held apart, such as actuality and potentiality, physical and mental, God

and nature, universal and particular, thought and feeling. It deepens the concept of reason making it as fundamental as consciousness, language, inference or any other special power. Coomaraswamy's metaphysics stands as a great modern synthesis, on a scale of comprehensiveness and elaboration rare in the history of philosophy.

The Vedic doctrine which is neither pantheistic nor polytheistic, nor a worship of the powers of Nature, has shown us that *Natura naturans est Deus* and that all her powers are but the names of God's acts; that *Karma* is not "fate" except in the orthodox sense of the character and destiny that inhere in created things themselves and, rightly understood, determines their vocation; that *Maya* is not illusion, but rather the maternal measure and means essential to the manifestation of a quantitative world of appearances, by which we may be either enlightened or deluded according to the degree of our maturity; that Reality is immutable and is not what its appearance seems to reveal in particular things which are ceaselessly appearing and disappearing, beginning to be, then progressively changing, decaying, and coming to an end; that finally *Reality* is not alone plurality, diversity, mutability and caducity but is rather *esse omnium est superesse divinitas*, namely, the being of all things is the divinity which is above being and this constitutes reality.

In such wise has Ananda Coomaraswamy brought to our consciousness the passion and wisdom that keeps the flame of the spirit alive. He has shown that it is contrary to Buddhist, as it is to Vedantic doctrine, to think of ourselves as wanderers in the

fatally determined storm of the world's flow. Our immortal Self is anything but a surviving personality. We are reminded that "it is not this man So-and-So that goes home and is lost to view," but the prodigal Self that recollects itself, and that having been many is now again one and inscrutable, *Deus absconditus*. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven" and the realization of Nirvana is the flight of the Alone to the Alone. But it is not a dark solitude that the spirit of Coomaraswamy now inhabits in eternity. If he were to speak to us, as indeed he still does, perhaps he would say with Plotinus, "I am here with that to which we are all ultimately committed in a great and ineluctable surrender, I am here with the One which is neither an *it*, nor a *he*, and it is because nothing in it is that everything comes from it; so much so that in order that being be, the One itself is bound not to be being but the father of being, and being is its first-born child.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(Dr. V. Raghavan, Head of the Department of
Sanskrit, University of Madras).

Jayeva patya usati visasre tanvam atmanah
Yasmai kala Bharati tam KUMARASVAMINAM numah

It was nearly nineteen years ago that I first got into touch with Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. I had published some papers on *Indian Theatre and Dance* in the *Triveni*, Madras and on Sanskrit Texts on Painting in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta. I had quoted in one of the former Dance articles, Kathakali and Other Forms of *Bharata Natya* outside

Kerala, a half-verse from the *Vishnudharmottara* on some images appearing to smile as it were in the sweetness of their form, and looking like possessing the breath of life, and instanced in that connection the figure of *Rajagopala* at the Mannargudi Temple; Coomaraswamy marked this passage and asked me to give the exact reference to the half-verse in the *Vishnudharmottara*.

In my article on Sanskrit Texts on Painting in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, I had criticised Coomaraswamy's interpretation of the terms *Rasachitra* etc. in the Painting chapter of the *Silparatna*, and in explaining the correct meanings of these terms, I had, for the first time, shown in extenso the indebtedness of the *Silparatna* text to that of the *Abhilashitarthachintamani*. Coomaraswamy not only accepted my interpretation of the terms *Rasachitra* etc., but got from me the exact references to the painting portion of Someswara's work and produced his translation of that portion in the *Technical Studies*, in the notes to which he made several references to my articles.

Another set of my articles in which Coomaraswamy took interest is *Natyadharmi* and *Lokadharmi* in the *Journal of Oriental Research*, which he later listed in the Bibliography at the end of his revised edition of the *Mirror of Gesture*. He expressed himself against the wrong and undue stress laid by me in my interpretation of the terms *Anukara* (imitation) and *Sadrsya* in the article on *Lokadharmi*, and after his further elucidation, in his own penetrating manner, of the exact import and limits of *Sadrsya* applicable to Indian Art, embodied in the volume on *Transformation of Nature in Art*, I came to understand that term in its proper perspective.

The increasing volume of day to day official work in purely literary fields prevented the further maintenance of regular correspondence, but communion through books and articles continued; reprints of his articles on Aesthetics were coming, and as a daily student of *Alankara-sastra* I was following everything that he wrote on Indian and mediaeval Christian aesthetic. Even later when his preoccupation was with comparative religion, my work continued to get his attention; he mentioned my paper on Dara Shikoh's *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (Mingling of the Two Oceans) in his on the One Summit to which all Paths Lead, included in the latest collection *Bugbear of Literacy*. Shortly before he passed away, he made enquiries about me and my work through one of our younger scholars who had been abroad. These recapitulations show how and to what extent Coomaraswamy influenced the mind and imagination of younger workers in the field of India's artistic and cultural heritage. The Sanskrit verse homage at the head of this article figured in a contribution that I made on the occasion of Coomaraswamy's sixtieth birthday, but which, strangely and unfortunately, was omitted and could not reach him.

The work of Coomaraswamy, like that of a true genius, was marked by both quantity and quality; numerous, varied and of outstanding excellence, his writings are all the more remarkable for their packed-up matter, the allusions and authorities cited almost for every phrase and sentence never however, disturbing the flow of the elegant diction that he always commanded. To scholars, his notes and bibliographies were objects of as much meticulous study as his essays, some of these references being too inaccessible

but very important publications, for example, the Earl of Portsmouth's *Alternative to Death*, a book that I tried very hard to get at. For pithiness, pregnant suggestion and poignant saying, his last years' expositions concerning philosophy and forms of society became especially remarkable.

Whatever the field one is working in, one finds that Coomaraswamy has something on it; recently, during my work on a critical edition of a Sanskrit work called *Sringaramanjari* on the different types of lovers, I found that I had some excellent material in Coomaraswamy's writing on the *Eight Kinds of Nayikas*.

For a whole generation he had been the foremost authority on Indian art and archaeology, and the greatest exponent of the ideals, methods and achievements of Indian art. His exposition has been an eye-opener not only to the West but more so to Indians themselves, who had fastly become oblivious of their heritage. But all this distinguished contribution of his was transcended by his last years' preoccupation in the larger field of life-philosophy, society-pattern and the common spiritual heritage of humanity. Spirituality is the inescapable inner magnet within Indian art and culture to which every true inquirer is ultimately drawn. To quote Coomaraswamy himself, his work progressed from Indian art to "the wider field of the whole traditional theory of art and of the relation of man to his work," and to "the fields of comparative religion and metaphysics," (*Talk at the Boston Dinner*), and "no day passed in which he did not search the Scriptures and the works of the great theologians of all ages." (*The Religious Basis of Forms of Indian*)

Society). "During many years," he says, I have collected from Eastern and Western sources parallel passages in which identical doctrines have been enunciated.....in order to show that the doctrines themselves are cognate in the same sense that etymons, e.g. of Greek and Sanskrit are cognate....." (*The Common Wisdom of the World by A. K. Coomaraswamy, Munshi Commemoration Volume*). "I am convinced with Jeremias that the human cultures in all their apparent diversity are but the dialects of one and the same language of the spirit....." (*Boston Dinner*). It is by his masterly exposition of the traditional view of art, craft and vocation, and of this "common universe of discourse" that he built up a new school of international intellectuals and literateurs who became profound believers in the *Philosophia Perennis*, *Sanatana Dharma*. While on one side the limited range and settled canons of official orientalism in the West and textual scholarship in India could not often see eye to eye with him, forgetting the fact that frequently the insight of an attuned imagination pierced to the truth more unerringly than the eye of mere scholarship or the spectacles of philological indexes, his expositions of the traditional view of life ran, on the other, counter to prevalent political and social doctrines in the West which he denounced in scathing terms as "a commercial financial institution having theft as its final object" and as "a mechanism" in which "the 'whole man' was reduced to mere 'hands,' 'cogs in a wheel,' 'copies of copies.' While we in India are being swept by these idealogies from the modern West and would cry at any call to preserve tradition as *atavism*, a steadily growing community of savants in the West has come to believe in the wisdom of the

teachings of Coomaraswamy. These are our new 'Astikas,' and Coomaraswamy their 'Acharya' ended up as a true 'Rishi' by resurrecting this 'Darsana' of tradition. The earlier we garner up the remnants of our traditional culture, the greater the prospect of the ark of the new and free India saving itself from deluge.

UNIQUE MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE WORLDS OF INDIAN THOUGHT AND WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP

*(Dr. Richard G. Salomon, Kenyon College, Gambier,
Ohio, U.S.A.)*

In my collection of photos there is a picture showing Ananda Coomaraswamy in discussion with myself. The photo is a cherished memento of the first Kenyon Conference on the Heritage of the English-Speaking Peoples which was held here in the fall of 1946, not long before Coomaraswamy's death. He appears in the picture in the colourful regalia of the University of London. For me, there is much of symbolical value just in this circumstance. Coomaraswamy will live in our memory as a unique mediator between the worlds of Indian thought and Western scholarship. Equally equipped with the intellectual armour and the traditions of both Eastern and Western civilization, he had been invited to participate in the Kenyon Conference "as a critic of Western ideas and attitudes" which formed the subject matter of the addresses delivered at that Conference. I had the privilege of listening to his lecture: "For what heritage and to whom are the English-speaking people responsible?" In listening to it then, as now in



Professor Richard G. Salomon of Kenyon College talks with Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy at Kenyon College Conference, Ohio, (October, 1946).



Sir George Bailey Sansom and Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy at
Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, October, 1946.

re-reading the printed text, I was deeply impressed by his admirable integration of intellectual honesty, profound scholarship and deep, almost mystical, spirituality. I did not feel the sting which his criticisms left with some of my Anglo-Saxon friends. To me, it was not difficult to hear, through the harsh accords of critical polemics, the "eternal melody" of his thought: his belief in Humanity. Being myself of German background, I have loved from my early years the Song of Songs of Humanity: Lessing's version of the old oriental parable of the Three Rings, in his "Nathan the Wise." Ananda Coomaraswamy, at that moment, appeared to me like a re-incarnation of Lessing's Sage, professing a wisdom that is above all differences in creed.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

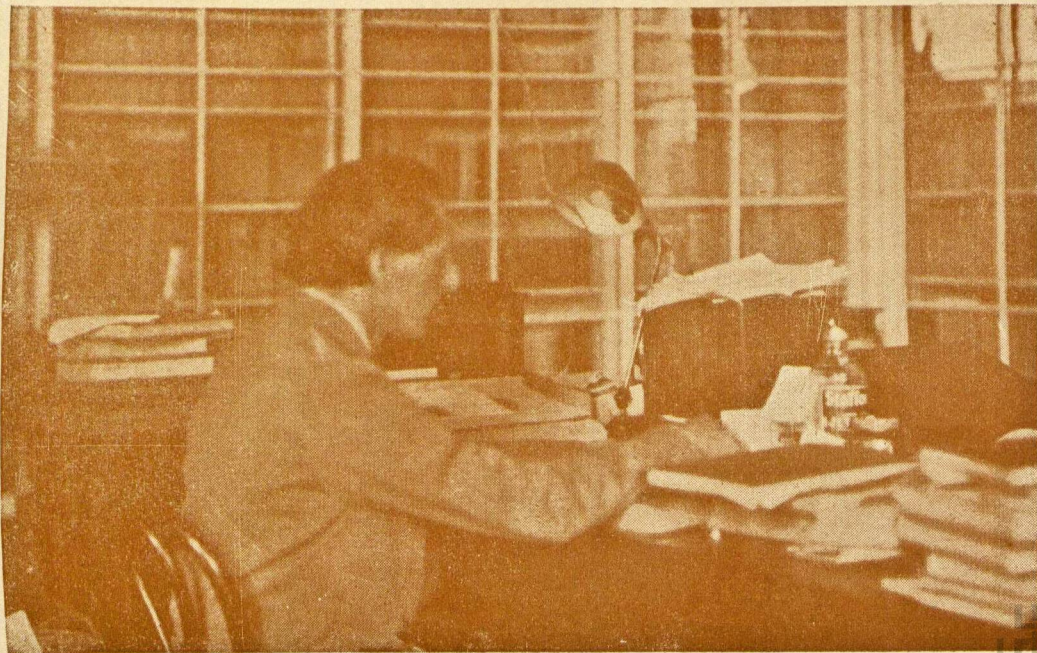
(Sir George Sansom, London)

I had a great respect for Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's personality and his work and I always made a point of seeing him whenever I visited Harvard University, or the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. These occasions were, however not frequent and I cannot say that I knew him at all intimately. I remember well our meeting at Kenyon College, and I recollect very vividly his striking, I might say magnificent appearance, when he took part in an academic procession, wearing the robes of a Doctor of the University of London. He had great dignity and was somewhat aloof, at least in his later years: but I found him always ready to answer very carefully and copiously questions which I sometimes put to him in writing on the history of Indian thought and art.

*In Memoriam**(Mrs. Edna W. Salsbury, Washington, U.S.A.)*

He who was one of us
 And yet more of the East,
 Lover and interpreter
 Of root-things, root-beauties
 Of the land of his birth;
 He, the Gurudev
 Of those whose memories
 Are hallowed shrines
 Lit by undying constancy—
 He has gone Thence,
 Even so a part of us
 Accompanies him.
 He was our Teacher—
 He has not ceased to teach.
 His words, an endless chain
 Of untarnishable gold:
 Gold fired in flames of truth,
 Universality,
 Brotherhood in Art.
 He, through them
 Does not cease to teach,
 To mold new thought with old
 Till we new beauty find
 In all products of the mind
 As he would have us do.





Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy at work in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (about 1924).



A WONDERFUL MAN

(*Dr. Mary Schimer, Boston.*)

I knew Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy personally. He did not take pupils usually, being busy with research work but since I lived in Boston I used to go to the Museum quite often. I got to know Dr. Coomaraswamy and had the privilege of reading under his guidance for a while. I went to see him before I started on my trip to the East, and he seemed quite well, a little tired-looking and thin but not more so than usually. Everybody in America had the highest admiration and regard for Dr. Coomaraswamy. He was a wonderful man.

DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Robert Treat Paine Jr., Asst. Curator Asiatic
Dept. of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts*).

The intellectual productivity of Dr. Coomaraswamy was hard to realize for those of us who merely saw the quiet research of a man before a well piled desk or heard the busy clicking of his typewriter. His work at the museum evolved gradually from the history of art to the underlying principles of aesthetics and from these to the study of metaphysics. With each change of interest the radius of his influence became greater. Yet to his colleagues in the museum the quietness of his personality never suggested the eminence of his position.

He loved a philosophical argument, but it was rather his keen perception in the use of words which

made him a stimulating conversationalist. The naturalness with which he could pass from the mediaeval or oriental point of view to the modern often became an incentive to thought. One day he remarked that "vacation" no longer had its original meaning. Once it designated a holiday or Holy Day, while now it suggests merely a period of idleness. Distinctions in connotation caused him to observe broad social changes, changes which were anything but progressive from the Doctor's point of view.

Even in discussions of art theory which often took place in the museum dining-room it was hard to correlate one's own field of interest with his theories which concerned all of art. But what was surprising was the consistency of his theory and taste, even in fields where he did not possess any specific knowledge. In the whole range of Chinese art he felt that the bronzes of the Shang and Chou periods were the most monumental products of this culture. Despite the glories of Sung painting, he was moved most by the primitive ritualistic work of unknown, or at least arguable, meaning. He enjoyed this type of art not because it conformed to his ideas but because this was an art which his attitude made enjoyable.

Few men could have been more industrious. His office in the museum was pleasantly withdrawn so that he was seldom disturbed. To him interruptions, unless they were to benefit the work of a fellow student, were wasted time in his zeal to clarify and express his thoughts. He seemed in his being to illustrate the saying in one of his favourite authors, Meister Eckhart, that "the soul is constant only to this unknowing knowing which keeps her pursuing."

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ART

(Dr. Leland C. Wyman, Ph.D, Boston University, U.S.A.)

"It is in this arena that I shall throw down a minimum challenge: I put it to you that it is not by *our* aesthetic, but only by *their* rhetoric, that we can hope to understand and interpret the arts of other peoples and other ages than our own."¹

One aspect of our culture's compulsive habit of wasting much precious time in fuss and bustle about non-essentials is the frequent preoccupation of educated men with just what kind of an "-ologist" their colleague may be. This magic in labels is nowhere more evident than in the field of education. The man who does not find himself tied by training, circumstances, professional requirements, or the insistence of his colleagues, to one restricted tag is rare indeed. One such great mind by its very nature could not be trammelled by the inventions of feebler intellects was that of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy. We were first drawn together by mutual interests in art, in education, but especially in anthropology, and it is of Coomaraswamy "the anthropologist" that I would speak here.² and, in spite of my remarks, above, I would

1. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (London, 1946) p. 34. Italics mine.

2. Others have and for long will continue to speak of him as an accomplished linguist, historian, metaphysician, social philosopher. In his earlier years he even attained eminence as a geologist and mineralogist (Director of Mineral Surveys for Ceylon). And all of us who knew him have poignant memories of his kindness, his friendliness, his capacity for moving simplicity as well as for profundity. On short acquaintance our awe before his learning was not lessened but was soon tempered by affection. I remember with gratitude his pains in answering my slightest question, but I recall with warmth his talking "dog-talk" to my Scottish terrier.

apply a "label" to his approach to art, one which he himself prefigured when he spoke of "the superiority of the anthropological to the psychological and aesthetic approaches to an unfamiliar art."³ To restrict his multifarious approach by one such designation is no fairer than to tie his name to a single discipline, but for the purposes of education in art "the anthropological approach" is more meaningful than simply "the Coomaraswamy approach" and is more apt, I believe, than any other possible title. For Dr. Coomaraswamy was ever mindful of what the native artist had to say about the use and meaning of his product, and this is the attitude of the anthropological field worker. Said he, "My thesis will be, then, that if we propose to use or understand any works of art (with the possible exception of contemporary works, which may be 'unintelligible') we ought to abandon the term 'aesthetic' in its present application and return to 'rhetoric,' Quintillian's *bene dicendi scientia*,"⁴ and in his discussions of the arts he was as ready to quote from the writings of Boas, Malinowski, Fr. Schmidt, Parsons, Mead, as from those of aestheticians or art historians. In any specific instance he was curious not only about the statements of the native maker but also about those of native artisans of "traditional" societies anywhere,⁵ Iceland, Celtic, Australian, American Indian. As he himself said of the anthropologist, he was "looking for something that is neither in the work of art as if in a place, nor in the artist as a private

3. The Art Bulletin, Vol. XXI, p. 204, 139.

4. Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought? op. cit., p. 10.

5. Cf. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Indra and Namuci* (Speculum, Vol. XIX, pp. 2-23, 1944), p. 18 ff.

property, but to which the work of art is a pointer," and, "For him, the signs, constituting the language of a significant art" were "full of meaning."⁶ "The superiority of the anthropological" approach to art should be nowhere more valid than in the teaching of art appreciation and history in College and University, so for those who will attend here was Dr. Coomaraswamy's great contribution to art education.

Another contribution, perhaps one of his greatest, was to the understanding of the inter-relationships of the mythology and folklore of the world, and folkloristic studies are usually considered a branch of anthropology. He once wrote, "Peut-être aucun sujet n'a-t-il été étudié par le savant moderne d'une façon plus 'extensive' que celui du folklore; et peut-être n'en est-il aucun dont l'interprétation ait été faussée par plus de préjugés"⁷, and "Le contenu du folklore est métaphysique. Notre impuissance à le reconnaître est due en premier à notre ignorance insondable de la métaphysique et de ses termes techniques."⁸ Without ranging himself dogmatically on either side of the controversy as to whether or not it is now possible to reconstruct an *ur-mythos* which became world-wide by whatever process, and without proselytizing as to

6. *Symptom, Diagnosis, and Regimen* (College Art Journal, Vol. 2, pp. 121-124, 1943).

7. There is, perhaps no subject that has been more extensively investigated and more prejudicially misunderstood by the modern scientist than that of folklore." *Figures of Speech*, op. cit. p. 216.

8. *De La "Mentalité Primitive"* (Études Traditionnelles, 44e Année, No. 236, pp. 277-300, 1939), pp. 277, 278. "The content of folklore is metaphysical. Our failure to recognize this is primarily due to our own abysmal ignorance of metaphysics and of its technical terms."

source⁹ he compiled and interpreted metaphysically innumerable unsuspected parallels, sparing no portion of the world's literature or oral tradition. Quite justifiably he could say "nous-mêmes, qui nous appelons des anthropologistes."¹⁰

TAGORE AND COOMARASWAMY

(Sri Amiya Kumar Sen, *Visvabharati, India*).

It is over two thousand years that Rajarshi Asoka sent a *Bodhidrum* sapling to be planted on the soil of Ceylon. This symbol of spiritual relationship of India and Ceylon, as also of India's goodwill and *maitri* towards Ceylon, helped to add a new chapter to the time-old intercourse that existed between these two countries. From that day onward Ceylon valued and fostered this gesture of goodwill not as a country conquered with the force of arms, but as a neighbour won through love and *dharma*. The destiny of these countries has not followed the same course, their political history in the subsequent centuries presented too many diversities but Ceylon always nursed in her heart of hearts the spiritual message she received from India though India herself was not the self-same India all through. In her journey through the road 'rugged with the rises and falls of nations,' India saw her days of spiritual and moral bankruptcy. A period of such evil days just preceded the occupation

9. "But we have no intention whatever of suggesting that India was therefore the source of the Western *matière*." *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, op. cit., p. 18.

10. *De la mentalité primitive*, op. cit., p. 279. "We, who call ourselves anthropologists."

of India by the westerners. A sudden conflict with western civilization awakened India from her slumber and she again engaged herself to re-discover her spiritual and moral inheritance. Beginning from Raja Rammohan and Ranade down to Tagore and Vivekananda,—we come across a galaxy of great Indians whose life-long endeavour it was to find out the forgotten spiritual and cultural wealth of India of olden days. In this critical and very memorable time of her history Ceylon also sent two of her greatest sons to the soil of India as if as a token of her past indebtedness to her. This incident can only be compared with the sending of *Bodhidrum* sapling by Asoka over two thousand years back. In personality and spiritual strength too, these two great souls were like a *Bodhidrum*. They were Anagarika Dharmapala and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. They found in India two other great contemporaries whose mission in life was similar to theirs. They were Swami Vivekananda and Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore. As a result of their joint effort it has been proved beyond doubts that though separated in the political sphere India and Ceylon have a heart common to both, looking apparently like a disconnected unit Ceylon is only a part of Greater India.

The life's *sadhana* of these four great souls was very similar but among them the similarity between Anagarika Dharmapala and Swami Vivekananda and between Coomaraswamy and Tagore was still greater in many respects. The two, first mentioned, were essentially missionaries and religion was their special field though none of these were religious preachers in the narrow sense of the term. The other two never donned a missionary's garb though they acted as the

Ambassadors of Indian civilization and culture among other nations of the world. Anagarika Dharmapala and Swami Vivekananda first met in Chicago in the Parliament of Religions, the effort of both being the unfolding of the spiritual significance of Indian culture. And Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy first met in their effort to feel and foster the cultural unity of Asia which was preached by Japan's great son Count Okakura. The movement for regeneration of Oriental Art mainly through the effort Okakura saw, from its very inception, an exponent of Indian culture like Rabindranath at its helm. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy appeared as the interpreter of Indian and Oriental Art and was responsible in many respects for its wide appreciation. But in this task of interpreting art he could not evidently shut himself to discussion of art alone. He had to interpret anew different aspects of Oriental civilization and culture. It was in this *Sadhana* of 'Discovery of India' as also of Asia that Tagore and Coomaraswamy met.

The personal relation between the two continued unabated for many years. Coomaraswamy enjoyed the friendship of the poet and Acharya Abanindranath in the ancestral home of the Tagores at Jorasanko in Calcutta. He was also the guest of the poet at Santiniketan. They also met more than once outside India. Cordial correspondence between the two continued over a long period of time. From the records kept in the Tagore Museum at Santiniketan it can be seen that the two exchanged letters as early as 1913. The last of the letters kept in the said Museum is dated 1934. Coomaraswamy always cherished a high respect for the Poet because the latter's literature was replete with India's eternal message to the world. Coomara-

swamy also voiced this message only in a different way. He was one of the very first to realise that Tagore's writings should reach the western mind. He with the late Ajit Kumar Chakravarti first rendered Tagore's poems into English (The first translation appeared in the *Modern Review* 1911 March-April). It was also Coomaraswamy who hailed Rabindranath, the painter, in inimitable language. Rabindranath in his turn, always respected Coomaraswamy as one of the greatest Indians who took upon their shoulders the task of rediscovering India.

In outward appearance, too, similarity between the two could not have escaped even a casual observer. After the death of Coomaraswamy the following observation appeared in one of the monthly journals:

"Slightly bent with age, hair turned grey in study and service, face serene lit by two dark eyes and with a thin beard struggling to reach his neck, he seemed an ancient *rishi* in a modern garb. He reminded one of Gurudeva Tagore in his stoop, in his demeanour and even in his walk. (*Modern Review* September 1947).

But this friendship and mutual respect and this outward resemblance are not the only things worth mention about him. A more close study reveals an awe-inspiring similarity between their way of thinking and method of work.

The most important event in the history of Asia including India in the last few centuries is the conquest of Asia, political and cultural, by the nations of the West. The first shock of this conquest overwhelmed Asia, so much so that she appeared very humble before the western eyes. But this shock again woke her up from her age-long stupor. The first son of Asia who could face the western civilization and culture equipped with the best traditions of the east

was Raja Rammohan Roy. 'Rammohan Roy was able to assimilate the ideals of Europe so completely because he was not overwhelmed by them, there was no poverty or weakness on his side.' (East and West: Greater India: Rabindranath Tagore).

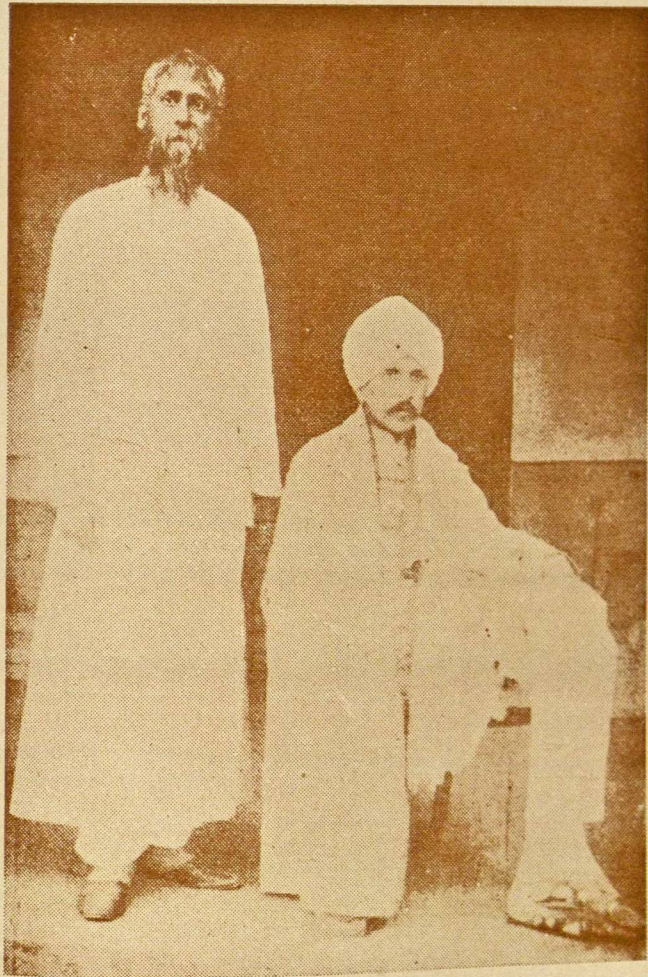
Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy are the best results of this assimilation of the West and revival of the East. Rabindranath's family traditions and early breeding gave him an atmosphere where he could realise the greatness of the East. His stay and training in Europe in the subsequent years helped him to see the best of western culture and put and weigh it in contrast with the traditions of the East. Coomaraswamy, on the other hand, was connected with the West by blood and education but nurtured an oriental mind as if by instinct. Rabindranath passed the last days of his life at Santiniketan in an atmosphere of the *Asrama* life of the old days of the Upanishads. Coomaraswamy also expressed an intention of retiring to a serene *Asrama* life. This wish of his was never fulfilled. But this shows his bent of mind.

In their condemnation of the aping of the West both of them were equally severe and strong.

'The young generation of the East.....in their intoxication with the new wine of boisterous energy from the West are, likewise growing unstable in their gait. (Satyam. Talks in China: Tagore).

Have you ever thought that India, politically and economically free, but subdued by Europe in her inmost soul is scarcely an ideal to be dreamt of, or to live, or die for. (Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

This does not mean that they were conservative and were for banning outright everything western. Both were fully alive to the great benefit we might derive out of our contact with the West. Their teach-



**Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Ananda
Coomaraswamy.**

(From a photograph by Babu Hiralal Sen,
Santiniketan, published in the *Modern
Review*, Calcutta for April 1911).

ing it was to take stand in the middle, with the East on the right, and the West on the left..... not to keep India in her latter day narrowness by ignoring in her history the advent of the west.' (East and West: Greater India: Rabindranath Tagore). They were for assimilation, for harmony, for creation.....opening up the high-road by which the thought-treasure of the East may pass to the West and the West to the East (Ibid). Coomaraswamy in his *Eastern Wisdom and Western Thought* harps again on the same tune. Rabindranath always stood for 'the Union of Cultures.' India was to him 'the vast shore of humanity' which invited all people from all countries. *Visva-Bharati*, the International University founded by him was the symbol of his ideal. Very similar was the ideal of an oriental University as dreamt by Coomaraswamy, though he never founded any such institution.

'Our university must above all be a school of oriental learning sufficient not only for ourselves, but to attract scholars from all parts of the world to learn the wisdom of the east in the east (Education in Ceylon : Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

But this exchange of ideas and 'Union of Cultures' between the West and the East could not produce the desired result if one party displayed vanity and the other felt small. Rabindranath in his numerous lectures during his over-seas tours and Coomaraswamy in his articles cautioned the West to shake off the false sense of vanity and learn wisdom at the feet of the East.

The smallness that the East felt was due to the ignorance of her inheritance and the absence of the feeling of kinship between the different units of the

east. Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy were drawn close to each other through their ceaseless effort to remove this ignorance and to discover the broken threads that once linked the countries of the East. Rabindranath was a close associate of Count Okakura, the initiator of the mantra 'Asia is One.' In his literature, all through his life, and during his tours in China, Burma, Indonesia and Ceylon, he time and again pointed out that the forgotten link among these countries must be restored before we can hope to get our esteemed position in the assembly of the nations of the world.

'I have come to ask you to reopen the channel of communion which I hope is still there; for though evergrown with weeds of oblivion its line can still be traced. I shall consider myself fortunate if through this visit, China comes nearer to India and India to China' (To my hosts: Talks in China : Tagore).

It seems to us no accident that Coomaraswamy succeeded Okakura as the Director of the Oriental Section of the Boston Museum, for he too like his predecessor, was a believer in 'One Asia' and worked for the '*Discovery of Asia*'. He not only unearthed '*the History of Indian and Indonesian Art*' but in thousand other ways tried to restore the bonds of union among the countries of the east. In one of his lectures to the students of Ceylon he says:

'I must also refer to a moment to which I give the name in my own mind of '*Discovery of Asia*' (Education in Ceylon: Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

This '*Discovery of Asia*' by an Indian presupposed the '*Discovery of India*' because unless each country of Asia were fully alive to its own heritage, the exchange of cultural ideals and communion among them



Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy
(taken during the time of the Poet's last visit to America in 1934).



in the field of thought could not take place. In order to discover Asia both Rabindranath and Coomaraswamy had to discover India anew. Those who have contracted even an average familiarity with Rabindranath's literature must have been struck by the fact that it contains the message of India from the earliest Vedic days down to the present day. As a matter of fact, we know of no literary figure like Rabindranath, Indian or foreign, whose writings have reflected so completely the cultural heritage of the past, the hopes and aspirations of the present and guidance of the future of his own country. The explanation of the Upanishads, the literary appreciation of Kalidasa, the restoration of the half-forgotten *padas* of the Vaishnava poets and every other effort to discover the ancient glory of India marked all the stages of his long and eventful life. He undertook frequent foreign tours not as a tourist or even as the Poet Laureate of India. He had a definite purpose in view and that was to make clear to the peoples of the other lands the significance of Indian civilization and culture. He invited foreign scholars and teachers to the educational centre of *Visva-Bharati* not only to be taught by them, he also infused the traditions of Indian culture into their minds.

Coomaraswamy too all through his long and active career took upon himself the task of rendering the ideal of Indian civilization to Indians as well as foreigners. Coming out in public as the interpreter of the spiritual significance of Indian Art he had, for reasons very apparent, to proclaim to the world what India had to teach in the field of art and culture in general. He, moreover, explained the inner meaning of the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita to foreigners in order

to make their access to these invaluable scriptures easy.

The comprehensive knowledge of a country and its people is not possible only through its classical literature and the culture of the aristocrats. It is even probable that, mixed up with many spurious elements not having their roots in the soil of the country, classical literature and aristocratic culture sometimes resist such comprehensive knowledge. But folk literature and folk culture presents an unadulterated account of a country and its people. Rabindranath, therefore, took a pioneer's effort in digging out Indian folk-literature and folk-culture from age-long oblivion. He not only collected various folk-songs but initiated others in and outside Bengal to take up this task in right earnest. He gave the folk-music the same place of honour occupied by the classical music, he combined folk-metres with grave and elegant ideas in his poems, he created a taste for folk-art through his village upliftment centre at Sriniketan. When he was once called upon to deliver an address in the Indian Philosophical Congress, he did not dilate upon any branch of the six systems of Indian Philosophy. He chose *The Philosophy of the People* as the subject of his discourse.

Coomaraswamy too, did not remain satisfied only with his explanation of the *Nature of Folk-lore and Popular Art* but in many cases was responsible for the collection and publication of folk-songs. He was of opinion that the best literature of a country would combine within its compass the qualities of the classical and the folk-literature of that country. In his introduction to the English version of the Bengali poems of *Vidyapati* he says:

"His position as a poet and maker of language is analogous to that of Dante in Italy and Chaucer in England. He did not disdain to use the folk-speech and folk-thought for expression of the highest matters. Just as Dante was blamed by the classical scholars in Italy so Vidyapati was blamed by pundits.....Vidyapati's Vaishnava padas are at once folk and cultivated art—just like the finest of Pahari paintings where every episode of which he sings finds exquisite expression." (Vidyapati, Bangiya Padavali: Ed: Coomaraswamy and Arun Sen).

The advancement of science and the extension of commercial relations between the different countries in the 18th and 19th centuries brought one evil at their wake. People everywhere became very pragmatic in their outlook of life. Utility and profit-making was becoming the main factor in life and education. Beauty and knowledge for its own sake, held only a very insignificant place compared to utility. Rabin-dranath and Coomaraswamy stood for balance and harmony through the revival of our sense of beauty against the absolute sway of utility. Their remarks in this respect sound very similar:

'Gross utility kills beauty. We have now all over the world huge production of things, huge organisation, huge administrations of empire obstructing *the path of life*. Civilization is waiting a great consummation, for an expression of its soul in beauty. This must be your contribution to the world. (To Students: Talk in China: Tagore).

'In exchange for this world of beauty that was our birthright, the nineteenth century has made our country a 'dumping ground' for all the vulgar superfluities of European over-production, (Swadeshi, True and False: Art and Swadeshi: Coomaraswamy).

As in our daily life we were being carried away by a sense of utility, so also in our political life, the first enthusiasm of our consciousness made us lay too much

stress on immediate gain. This loss of balance according to Tagore and Coomaraswamy was detrimental to our interest in the long run. Intensely patriotic, they both were of opinion that political freedom gained by any possible means could not be our aim. The one-sided view of life which pawned every other thing to gain political independence and commercial interests, would mean loss of faith in greater humanity and that would bring about dangerous consequences. To be severed from our old traditions and be satisfied with self-government would mean the death of spiritual India. Our political leaders were blind to these things but these two sentinels were never tired of repeating the words of caution:

‘Therefore I would urge my own countrymen to ask themselves if the freedom to which they aspire is one of external conditions. Is it merely a transferable commodity?’ (The spirit of Freedom: Creative Unity: Tagore).

‘Those of us in India, who have come under the delusion that mere political freedom will make us free, have accepted their lessons from the west as the gospel truth and lost their faith in humanity.....This becomes possible only because people do not acknowledge moral and spiritual freedom as their object. (Nationalism in India: Nationalism: Tagore).

‘Learn not to waste the vital forces of the nation in a temporary political conflict but understand that art will enable you to reestablish all your arts and industries on a surer basis. Swadesi must be something more than a political weapon. It must be a religious artistic ideal. (Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

‘Have you ever thought that India politically and economically free, but subdued by Europe in her inmost soul is scarcely an ideal to be dreamt of or to live or die for. (Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

To them it was not the rein of political power that we should first of all take into our own hands

but it was the system of education that needed most to be nationalised. Both thought that an India with even one generation of National education would not need fight for freedom.

'I repeat that our education is the thing which we should first of all take into our hands.' (The way to get it done: Greater India: Tagore).

It is a marvel to me how a self-respecting people can endure for a day, not the system of government—but the system of Education from which we suffer. (Swadesi True and False: Art and Swadesi: Coomaraswamy).

It is for this reason that Rabindranath shifted the sphere of his public activity from politics to education quite early in his career. Both he and Coomaraswamy were for an overhauling change in the system of education through which the young generation of India would become alive to their past traditions, would learn to assimilate the culture of the East so that they might face the West on equal terms, ready to receive what is best in her and giving out their best at the same time. Both dreamt and worked for a better world of mutual goodwill and understanding which would pave the way to a free commerce not of commodities but of ideas among nations for the benefit of all and leading all to a more glorious future the world has ever seen.

AN EVENING WITH DR. COOMARASWAMY

(Dr. Albert Franz Cochrane, Boston, U.S.A.)

In the Egyptian Book of Ptah-Hotep, one of the ancient writings known to man, we are admonished in these words: "Be not haughty because of thy knowledge: converse thou with the ignorant as with the scholar: for the barriers of art are never closed, no

artist ever possessing the perfection to which he should aspire." And reading on, we come to this striking sentence: "Love for the work they do, this brings men to God."

Like so much that was written in the once fertile Valley of the Nile, these words live today as fresh and virile as when first recorded on the unrolled papyrus of the scribe who gave them eternal life, nearly four thousand years before Christ. Through the ensuing centuries they have been re-discovered independently by countless Saints and Philosophers of all lands and races: found anew, but always in the faithful echo of that first writing in the ancient Book of Ptah-Hotep.

Those who knew Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, in life and in scholarship, might well accept those two sentences from the remote ages as cornerstone and keystone respectively of his profound inquiry into Life and the arts that interpret its meaning. There is one thing I admired above all else in Dr. Coomaraswamy's scholarship, deeply humanistic and practical, that he never devoured the shell in place of the yolk. He recognized art, at least in its higher plane of expression, to be a map of Infinity, leading to God Himself, the Supreme Artist. Men of smaller talents endeavour to view Art, as they view Life itself, not connecting the planned and ordered Universe, circling and closing only upon itself, endless movement without purpose.

Metaphysically expressed, the artist, by the very nature of his gift, aspires to a perfection which he can never attain, for Perfection is God; but his art, belonging as it does to the great stream of creative force, functions at its highest when it brings mankind to a greater knowledge of God.

Likewise, while realizing full-well that "the beauty of a work of art is independent of its subject," Dr. Coomaraswamy rightly and insistently contended that "to the artist, himself, the subject is never immaterial. He has ever been concerned with saying clearly what had to be said. In all ages of creation, the artist has been in love with his particular subject—and when it is not so, we see that this work is not 'felt'—he has never set out to achieve the Beautiful, in the strict aesthetic sense, and to have this aim is to invite disaster, as one would seek to fly without wings." To the artist, then, there must be purpose, and Beauty is its incidental but great by-product.

The deeper Dr. Coomaraswamy inquired into the motivations of significant epochs in art, Asiatic and European alike, the more certain became his conviction, and the more clear its enunciation, that the noblest function of art is to increase man's appreciation of God in the on-sweeping anthropomorphic stream of creative expression, wherein conflux efforts human and Divine.

Indeed, he reserved for the very last sentence in his notable and culminating work on *The Transformation of Nature in Art* this summarizing thought as regards the often condemned and so-called "idolatrous" use of images in worship, Indian or otherwise: "The modern aesthetician and Kunsthistoriker, interested only in aesthetic surfaces and sensations, fails to conceive of the work as the necessary product of a given determination, that is, as having purpose and utility. The worshipper, for whom the object was made, is nearer to the root of the matter than the aesthetician who endeavours to isolate beauty from function."

Like most of men of superior attainment, Dr. Coomaraswamy had numerous avenues of interest radiating from and feeding the central plan of his studies. But in the perspective of the philosophic viewpoint, they all seemed to converge, one upon the other, to make conterminous and indivisible the ethnographic boundaries that history arbitrarily has tended to build up between the past and the present, the East and the West. Much of his inquiry has naturally centered upon the continuing pageant of India in its seemingly contradictory roles of an all but insulated, self-contained sub-Continent, and as a component and inseparable part of European and world culture to which it has contributed much, and most of that in a manner indirect and elusive: influence that is felt more than observed or recorded.

Those who knew Dr. Coomaraswamy as the Keeper of the superb Indian, Persian and Mohamedan collections at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, knew him also as an ardent and energetic protagonist of a strong and vital India of Tomorrow. More than thirty years ago, as a pioneer spirit in the Young India movement, he published—in London—an essay boldly asserting that "It will never be possible for the European nationalist ideal that every nation should choose its own form of government, and lead its own life, to be realized—so long as the European nations have, or desire to have, possessions in Asia. What has to be secured is the common co-operation of East and West for common ends, not the subjugation of either to the other, nor their lasting estrangement." A few days before his death in 1947, Dr. Coomaraswamy was able to celebrate with a group of Indian students at Harvard University, Cambridge, the re-emergence of India as a

self-determining nation. But even in the long years of struggle to give realisation to that dream now become a practical actuality—an actuality itself poignantly accentuated in the almost immediate assassination of Mohandas K. Gandhi—Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy was awake to India's faults and weakness, as well as to her strength. And so he wrote, in those early years, chidings even more applicable today than then: "The flowering of humanity is more to us than the victory of any party. The only condition of a renewal of life in India, or elsewhere, should be spiritual, not merely an economic and political awakening, and it is on this ground alone that it will be possible to bridge the gulf which as been supposed to divide the East from the West. And so while India is occupied with national education and social reconstruction at home, she must also throw in her lot with the world: what we need for the creation of a common civilization is the recognition of common problems, and to co-operate in their solution. Meanwhile, it is not sufficient for the Western world to stand aside from the development of Asia, with idle curiosity or apprehension wondering what will happen next. There is serious danger that the degradation of Asia will ultimately menace the security of European social idealism, for the standing of idealism is even more precarious in modern Asia than in modern Europe: and that would be a strange nemesis if European Post-Industrialists should ultimately be defeated by an Industrialism or Imperialism of European origin established in the East!.....Asia is like the artist in the modern city—doing nothing great mainly because nothing heroic is demanded of him. *The future of India depends as much upon what is asked of her as upon what she is!*"

When one is fortunate enough to have a philosopher as one's guest for an evening, it may not be deemed quite polite, but it most certainly is not unwise to permit and encourage him to do most of the talking. And so, with Dr. Coomaraswamy as that guest, and

through the simple device of taking sentences here and there from his writings, without special regard to chronological or textual sequence, but also without conscious distortion, we ask and have answered the question: "What, Doctor, in your opinion, is the greatest contribution that India has made, or can make to humanity?"

The reply is: "All that India or any people can offer to the world proceeds from her philosophy. Of course, every race must solve its own problems, and those of its own day. I do not suggest that the ancient Indian solution of the special Indian problems, though its lessons may be many and valuable, can be directly applied to modern conditions. The Brahmanical idea is an Indian 'City of the gods,'—as *devanagari*, the name of the Sanskrit script, suggests. The building of that city anew is the constant task of civilization; and though the details of our plan may change, and the contour of our building, we may learn from India to build on the foundations of the religion of Eternity.

"Where the Indian mind differs most from the average mind of Modern Europe is in its views of the value of philosophy. In Europe and America the study of philosophy is regarded as an end in itself, and as such it seems of but little importance to the ordinary man. In India, on the contrary, philosophy is not regarded primarily as a mental gymnastic, but rather with deep religious conviction, as our salvation from the ignorance which forever hides from our eyes the vision of reality. Philosophy is the key to the map of life, by which are set forth the meaning of life and the means of attaining its end. It is no wonder, then, that the Indians have pursued the study of philosophy with enthusiasm, for these are matters which concern all. The challenge of the East is very precise: To what end is your life? Without an answer to this question there may indeed be change, but progress is impossible; for without a sense of direction, who knows if we do not return upon our footsteps in everlasting circles?"

Correctly enough, Dr. Coomaraswamy makes no claim that India's contribution to the animistic philosophy of man's relation to God's eternity is exclusively her's. Egyptian society was practically builded upon the thesis, and all races of people, at least in their beginnings understood and acknowledged as much. Indeed, the latest claim to a place in the continuity of that great theme comes to hand in a book just published as these lines are written. Interestingly enough, it deals with *The Indians of the Americas* and its author, Mr. John Collier, who has spent more than twenty-five years living among the surviving once powerful tribes, presents a strong and convincing argument which, while dissipating much of the misunderstanding engendered by the sudden contact of the White Man with a totally new and superficially "savage" peoples, clearly indicates that tribal life, both in the disassociated and differing nations of the north and the closely knit empires to the south, were, and continue to be, deep-rooted in an all-pervading controlling cosmic consciousness.

So new will this viewpoint be to many who have not had Mr. Collier's opportunity to study at first hand these fascinating peoples the aboriginals of the New World, it should be interesting to quote a passage or two, if only to indicate how similar can be the claims advanced in behalf of each race in the inherent sense of participation in the cosmic scheme. For example: Mr. Collier was one of but two white men ever permitted to witness the annual night-long sacred dance by the Pueblo Indian tribes atop ten thousand-foot high Taos Mountain in New Mexico. "On this night, at this place," he reported, "the spirit of the Pueblo religion could have been mistaken by none.....The

rejoicing was not only a human rejoicing; and that marvellous ever-renewed, ever-increasing, ever-changing leap and rush of song was not only human song. A threshold had been shifted, forces of the wilds and of the universe had heard the call. That is what the tribe believed: that is how it seemed. The Indian's relationship to the forces and beings (evoked in the sacred dance) is not chiefly one of petition or adoration or dread, but rather a seeking and sharing in joy. It is a partnership in an eternal effort." And speaking of Indian "culture" in general, he insists that "they (the American Indians) had what the world has lost. They have it now. What the world has lost, the world must have again, lest it die. Not many years are left to have or not have, to recapture the lost ingredient.....the ancient, lost reverence and passion for the earth and its web of life.....with the universe and with God. So the Indian record is the bearer of one great message to the world. Could we make it our own, there would be an eternal and inexhaustible earth and a forever lasting peace."

The differing and totally un-related Indian civilizations of Asia and the Americas, historically speaking had this in common: each had its "glorious" epoch of achievement, followed by a prolonged period of decay: each has its prophets of a new dawn and brighter tomorrow: each has been the victim of European aggression and domination, although the seed of internal disintegration was, in retrospect, easily evident in the empires of both the Inca and the Maha-raja.

"The beauty and logic of (Asiatic) Indian life belongs to a dying past," says Dr. Coomaraswamy, "and the Nineteenth Century has degraded much and created

nothing. The decay of Asia proceeds partly of internal necessity, because at the present moment the social change from co-operation to competition is spoken of as progress, and because it seems to promise the ultimate recovery of political power, and partly as the result of destructive exploitation. In Europe, the War is merely the evidence and not the cause of chaos; there is immediate hope for Europe since he that is down need fear no fall. Western civilization stands at the beginning of a new movement, and is not without renewed religious motivation. But India affords the most tragic spectacle of the world, since we see there a living and magnificent organization, akin to, but infinitely more complete than that of Mediaeval Europe, still in the process of destruction. Inheriting incalculable treasure, she is still incalculably poor, and most of all in the naivete with which she boasts of the poverty that she regards as progress. One questions sometimes whether it would not be wiser to accelerate the process of destruction than to attempt to preserve the broken fragments of the great tradition.

* * *

"But it is not only in Philosophy and Religion—Truth and Love—but also in Art that Europe and Asia are united: and from this triple likeness we may infer that all men are alike in their divinity."

* * *

"There are no degrees of beauty: the most complex and the simplest expression remind us of one and the same state. The sonata cannot be more beautiful than the simplest lyric, nor the painting than the drawing, merely because of their greater elaboration. A mathematical analogy is found if we consider large and small circles; these differ only in their content, not in their circularity."

* * *

"The vitality of a tradition persists only so long as it is fed by intensity of imagination."

* * *

"Beauty can never be measured, for it does not exist apart from the artist himself, and the *rasika* (appreciative critic or spectator) who enters into his experience."

"The true critic, *rasika*, perceives the beauty of which the artist has exhibited the signs."

* * *

"The poet is born, not made; but so also is the *rasika* whose genius differs in degree, not in kind, from that of the original artist."

* * *

"It is of the essence of art to bring back into order the multiplicity of Nature, and it is in this sense that it 'prepares all creatures to return to God.' Decadent art is simply an art that is no longer felt or energized."

* * *

"True art, pure art, never enters into competition with the unattainable perfection of the world, but relies exclusively on its own logic and its own criteria, which cannot be tested by standards of truth or goodness applicable in other fields of activity."

* * *

"Modern European art endeavours to represent things as they are in themselves, Asiatic and Christian art to represent things as they are in God, or nearer to their source."

* * *

"Asiatic art is ideal in the mathematical sense: like Nature, not in appearance, but in operation."

* * *

"Every artist discovers beauty, and every critic finds it again when he tastes of the same experience."

* * *

"It may be claimed that beauty exists everywhere; and this I do not deny, though I prefer the clearer statement that it may be discovered anywhere."

* * *

"If bees have been deceived by painted flowers, why was honey not provided?.....The more an image is true to nature, the more it lies."

* * *

"Mere narration (*nirvaha*, *itihasa*), bare utility, are not art, or are only art in a rudimentary sense. Only the man

of little wit can fail to recognize that art, by nature, is a well-spring of delight, whatever may have been the occasion of its appearance. On the other hand, there cannot be imagined an art without meaning or use. The doctrine of Art for Art's Sake is disposed of in a sentence quoted in the *Sahiya Darpana*, V.L. Commentary: 'All expression (*vakya*), human or revealed, are directed to an end beyond themselves (*harya-param*) of if not so determined (*ata-partve*) are thereby comparable only to the utterances of a madman.' "

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There are many persons who, in viewing art foreign to their own experience, find such unfamiliar objects to be without merit or, as in the case of the ten-armed figure of such a typical Indian deity as *Mahishamardini*, to be even repulsive because humanity itself offers no counterpart to such as they. I have reserved for my final quotation, Dr. Coomaraswamy's interesting answer to this oft-expressed objection:

"In these figures we cannot speak of the many arms as 'additional members' because in a human being they might appear to be such.....These images belong in a world of their own," and their artistic merit must be judged solely by the "logic of the world they represent." "It is no criticism of a fairy tale to say that in our world we meet no fairies: it is no criticism of a beast-fable to say that after all animals do not talk English or Sanskrit. Nor is it a criticism of an Indian icon to point out that we know no human being with more than two arms!

"To appreciate any art, we ought not to concentrate our attention upon its peculiarities—ethical or formal—but should endeavour to take for granted whatever the artist has taken for granted. No motif appears bizarre to those who have been familiar with it for generations.

"For those should not air their likes and dislikes in Oriental art, who, when they speak of art, mean mere illustration: for there they will rarely meet with what they seek, and the expression of their disappointment becomes wearisome."

DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY: His Conception of Art.

(Sri P. Sama Rao, Bellary, India.)

*All shafts of light, all shadows of darkness
Pour from the Soul on my being, O Sea,
And my heart becomes a trembling shadow
Amidst these uncertain shades.*

What hope is here or truth?

What fear trembles? What lie invades?

—SAGAR-SANGIT: C. R. Das.

I

Just as to the late Chitranjan Das the Sea was his beloved, to the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, who is no less a mystic, Art was his beloved, despite the fact that everything save God was an illusion, and Art, besides, was a blasphemy in the words of Roger Fry. The immortal relation to art which he established had nothing trivial or fissiparous about it; for he ardently believed with the primitive faith that "the more abstract the truth you wish to teach, the more you must allure the senses to it," and the physical tie between the sexes is as much a true and efficient basis for spiritual endeavour as the Yogic contemplation is. *Brihadarnayaka Upanishad* lays down, "For just as one who dallies with a beloved wife has no consciousness of outer and inner, so the spirit also, dallying with the Self-whose-essence-is-knowledge has no consciousness of outer and inner." Just as this identification of the subject with the object is the chief aim of the Yoga philosophy, it is also a pre-requisite for the most perfect art;" for as this savant explains, "it is a test of art that it should enable the spectator to forget himself, and to become its subject as he does in



DR. ANANDA COOMARASWAMY.
(A dry brush sketch by Sri Sudhir Khastagir).

dreams.” In other words as he himself inimitably expatiates,” not merely the female forms felt to be equally appropriate with male to adumbrate the mystery of the Over-Soul, but the interplay of all psychic and physical sexual forces is felt in itself to be religious.”

Thus to him there was a close “analogy between amorous and religious ecstasy.....” In this vein he evolves a synthesis between the seeming contradiction committed by the Indian imager when he represented on the temple walls with the same sensuous glamour “the Yogi and the Apsarasa, the saint and the ideal courtesan.” This perfect catholicity of vision was the monopoly of the Indian artist alone, although a William Blake here or a Francis Thompson there in the West could stumble into the right mood of oneness (Cf. *Kathopanishad* line, *Drisyate tvagryiya budya sukshmaya sukshma darsibhih*”), and exclaim with respect to poet’s function,

*“To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.”*

or,

*“Life with Death
In obscure nuptials moveth
Commingling alien, yet affined breath.”*

respectively, which have parallels in verses 11 and 14 of *Isavastopanishad* when freely translated read

*“Knowledge and non-knowledge—
He who this pair conjointly knows,
With non-knowledge passing over death,
With knowledge wins the immortal”*



"Becoming and destruction

*He who this pair conjointly knows,
With destruction passing over death,
With becoming wins the immortal."*

—(Holmes).

The Indian artists therefore, according to this savant were "not afraid of Love or Death but played their part without dismay or elation; and this freedom is the secret of the power of their art"; for they were always gifted with the vision which saw one Protean Life behind all Names and Forms—they worshipped Death and Life alike, for they knew that THAT pervades this universe is changeless and imperishable."

It is not therefore hard to see why art was Dr. Coomaraswamy's sole passion in life. It was both an inspiration and necessitous food and clothing to his physical being. The pursuit of art cleared his outlook of all cloudening motives so that he could easily grasp the quintessence of things, and thereby apprehend the Divinity that lay concealed behind their appearances. Thus what the Vedic seer invoked poetically in '*Hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukham, Tat tvam Pushannapavrunu satya dharmaya drishtaye*' which when translated reads, "With a golden bowl remains closed the face of Truth. Uncover it, O Pushan, so that I devoted to Truth, may behold IT."

Ananda Coomaraswamy has invoked through art-criticism, and has well succeeded in presenting to us, a synthetic conception of Art which excludes all barriers of nationalism. He is explicit in the matter when he has declared, "I do not perceive a fundamental distinction of arts as national—Indian, Greek, or English. All Art interprets life: it is like the Vedas, eternal, independent of the accidental conditions of

those who see or hear." The reasons for such a finding are not far to seek, because "it is the artist's function" in his own words again, "to cultivate same-sightedness, to recognise one Reality behind the pleasant and unpleasant Names and Forms, the familiar and unfamiliar formulas, it is needful to go behind the merely representative element to the purely emotional content of art, its dealings with love and death, for these are exactly the same to all in all nations and times all over the earth." It is this content, the movement of the Spirit that is universal subject-matter of art, and the "meaning of art is far deeper than that of its immediate subject."

Like creation our theories of Art are multifaced and variously based, however, upon our own capacities to experience to one essential 'Plastic Force' indwelling them all. As the Doctor remarks, "The shadows of reality are of many varied outlines and move across our vision with mysterious elusiveness. Perhaps the greatest end of any art is to show to us that no one shadow is eternal or self-existent, only LIGHT is that." It is the duty of the artist in that process of synthetization to succeed in seeing the ONE in the many and many in the ONE. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy's contribution towards the proper understanding of the oneness of Truth, Beauty and Goodness behind the temporal phenomena in life, is indeed remarkable. What the acute philosophers like Plato, Baumgarten, Hegel and others failed to explain, this eastern savant of the mechanized XXth century has succeeded in clarifying. As he himself has beautifully said, "But let us not love art because it will bring us prosperity; rather because it is a high function of our being; a door for thoughts to pass from

the unseen to the seen, the source of those high dreams and the embodiment of that enduring vision, that is to be Indian nation's not less, but more strong and more beautiful than "than ever before, and the gracious giver of beauty to all nations of the earth." This is indeed a clarified statement of the injunction of Yagnyavalkya to Maitreyi Vth Brahmahana of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

"Lo, verily, not for the love of the gods are the gods dear, but for the love of the soul the gods are dear;

Lo, verily, not for the love of the Vedas are the Vedas dear, but for the love of the soul the Vedas are dear;

Lo, verily, not for the love of the beings are beings dear, but for the love of the soul beings are dear;

Lo, verily, not for the love of all is all dear, but for the love of the soul all is dear."

Coomaraswamy's statement abovenoted in the nutshell not only defines Art but also fixes the attitude of the artist towards his subject. It evidences his high patriotism also. It is therefore no hyperbole to assert that in the history of art-criticism his place is unchallenged and unique.

II

Dr. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was a happy blend of the eastern and western cultures, which culminated in the output of quite a good mass of precious literature of aesthetic criticism, at once edifying, serene and universal in outlook. His works have been many and various ranging from 1908 to 1947, and all of them are concerned in justifying and edifying the Indian traditions of Art embodied in the Vedas,

Upanishads, *Brahmanas*, *Silpa Sastras*, and books on Rhetoric like the *Dasarupa* and *Alamkara Sastras*, against the rather chaotic and imperfect conceptions of art of the western rhetoricians and Christian mystics, inclusive of Plato, Quintilian, Plotinus, Diogenes, Baumgarten and Hegel. He has brought upon his studies his vast learning, his high imagination and his intuition, quite characteristic of our old Rishis. In a way his works comprehend a thorough examination into every theory of Art, such as 'Art for Art's sake,' 'Art for morality's sake,' 'Art for pleasure's sake,' and are hall-marked for the synthesis he has evolved out of them all, which transcends and clarifies all the purblind notions obsessing us today. This synthesis is not exclusive but takes in its sweep every human activity that is reminiscent of the God-head, the triune principle of Baumgarten's Truth, Goodness and Beauty, which the western philosophers and mystics propounded as the real base of all artistic endeavour. Our savant elucidates and spiritualises this principle into 'SANTHAM, SIVAM and SUNDRAM' and establishes beyond all doubt that genuine art is a Sadhana, in that it emulates the Divine, and reflects the eternal attributes such as bliss, auspiciousness and beauty of the Infinite.

According to Plato all beautiful objects have their archetypes or divine parallels in heaven, and highest art is concerned only with their reproduction by the human. In the same way as the Doctor has pointed out, "Indian works of Art are called counterfeits or commensuration (*Anukruti*, *Tadakarata*, *Praktikriti*, *Pratibimba*, *Pratimana*, and likeness—*Sarupya*, *Sad-risya*). This does not mean that it is a likeness in all respects that is needed to evoke the original, but

an equality as to the whichness and whatness or form and force of the archetype; it is this real equality or adequacy that is the truth and the beauty of the work.....” In other words, what Plato means by imitation and by art is an “adequate symbolism.” The element of goodness in a piece of art has been defined by Plato similarly, with which our savant is in perfect accord, when he comments, “Plato has always in view an attainment of the best both for the body and the soul, since for any single kind to be left by itself pure and isolated is not good, nor altogether possible; the one means of salvation from these evils is neither to exercise the soul without the body nor the body without the soul.” For Art is Yoga, and Yoga is perfection in action (Yogah karmasu kausalam, of Gita). A perfect act is that that is adequate to the great End, dispassionate, and void of any desire, save perhaps of the aspiration initially to reach the Divine through the four steps, *Sarupya*, *Samipya*, *Salokya* and *Sayujya* (Cf. Verse 28 of Sri Samkara’s SIVANANDALAHARI.)

SILPI according to our Silpa Sastras comprehends the poet, the sculptor, the painter, the musician and the dancer, and he must be a perfect *karmin*. As the Doctor sums up, “He should be one who wears a sacred thread, a necklace of sacred beads, and a ring of kusa grass upon his finger; one (who) delighting in the worship of God, faithful to his wife, avoiding strange women, true to his family, of a pure heart and virtuous, chanting the Vedas, constant in the performance of ceremonial duties, piously acquiring a knowledge of various sciences. In order that the artist should produce a delectable piece of art he has to pass through all these four stages, before the subject with all its adequacy and essence is limned on his own

mind. This enjoins on him due contemplation of his subject with all the perfect consecration and adamant faith of the primitive. The Yogic concentration prescribed in AGNI PURANA, SUKRANITI SARA and Tantric Texts like the PRAPANCA SARA (Sri Samkara), and the Buddhist KIM-CHIT-VISTARA-TARA SADHANA are no less essential to the artist as to a spiritual aspirant. This raises the moot point whether intention is at all necessary for him either in conception or execution, of his subject. The Doctor is quite explicit and conclusive on the point when he has successfully asserted to the negative in deeming the artist as but a vehicle merely for the in and the outflow of the great beauty dwelling in Divinity. As has been already said intention and resolution are constituents of the artist's being only to the extent of perceiving in his own self the Super-Self with an infinite bliss akin to that of the latter as described by Sri Samkara in Verse 95 of SVATNA NIRUPANAM, which translated reads:

"On the vast canvas of the self, the self itself paints the picture of the manifold worlds, and the Supreme Self seeing but Itself enjoys great delight."

According to Dr. Coomaraswamy highest art lies only in the perfect coordination between thought and its expression in the clearest and the most comprehensive and edible manner. All the finites with their sweet suggestion of the Infinite, the Eternal and the Divine, are but the concrete tangible shadows or reflexes of the Absolute (Cf. Plato), that lurks behind appearance and phenomenal existence, investing however, the creation with its own matchless glow. Thus

the One Reality behind all being is its own evidence through symbols such as words, forms, shapes, gestures, melodies in which IT manifests ITSELF, through the instrumentality of the heart and the brain that could experience IT. This perception has its source in the same Reality too, and its being in the highest spiritual plane, however distinct it be from IT, partakes its divine complexion and is quite inseparable from its parent in the last stage of perfect becoming IT. Thus the highest artistic activity seeking to reduce the Infinite into finites of tangible form and melody is the activity of the unconditioned Absolute at a manifestation of ITSELF conditionally. In other words the artist is but a medium for the Divine to exhibit Himself and His ineffable glory. There is thus only 'inspiration' in the artist when he is 'possessed' by Divinity, but not 'intention' or mechanical deliberation, as these words are commonly understood. Invocation of the Divine by artists and poets to bless their efforts with success bears therefore no other connotation or justification. Hence the artist is but a creature of the Divine Will, and his artistic creations glow only and in direct proportion to as and when the Divine wills them. The Indian artists were therefore non-egoistical and never for a moment owned their achievements to themselves. Till the Persian and the Moghul Schools with their secularity began to influence the Indian artists, the Indian artists preferred to remain anonymous. This explains why we have not been able to locate even one name among the builders and carvers who chiselled miles and miles of delightful forms at Amaravathi or Borubudur or Badami, or painters who decorated with rhythmic lines from their brushes the caves at Ajanta.

III

From a perusal of the Doctor's work on aesthetics it is not difficult to see how hard he toiled at the altar of Art for a proper understanding of it. These works besides differentiating in the matter of technique and outlook the Hindu, the Jain and the Buddhist art, draw a sharp line between the styles of the European and the Oriental Schools in general, and the Rajput and Moghul Painting in particular. In this he has not failed to keep his vision clear as to the oneness of the cultural activity common to them all. He stresses that these differences in representation are the outcome of the differences in races and their own peculiar mode of thought. Thus the essential quality of art buried below their distinctive garb is but accidental. These differences should not be allowed to purblind one's eyes into believing in any nationalization of art. Since Art is universal, it admits of common appeal to all and sundry irrespective of race. That is the message and the synthetic vision of our savant. According to this writer Art is nothing but a perfect activity of the finite to become the Infinite. In the process of becoming It the self withdraws into itself to find its own atomic essence in great humility, naturally and unconsciously, in order that it may relate itself to the atomic oneness of the Supreme Self imminent in Nature and in other creation. In its great recession or retreat into a quality of seeming deadness to everything save itself its dynamism reduces itself into a static equilibrium, a state of great placidity, composure and repose, and a perfect readiness to absorb and reflect the essential quality of the Divine-itself having become partly divine. As

Jung has put it, in psychological terms, this concentration or Yoga "is the willed introversion of a creative mind, which retreating before its own problem and inwardly collecting its forces, dips at least for a moment into the source of life, in order there to wrest a little more strength from the mother for the completion of the work. The result of the reunion of the self with the Super Self is a fountain of youth and new fertility." This relation of the soul to the Super-Soul through concrete and tangible action is Art. It is not therefore that which does not suggest nor commemorate the Infinite and the Eternal.

This infinite suggestion is called Dhvani by our Sanskrit rhetoricians. Verses 41 and 42 of *Uttara Gita* set out this eternal relation between the soul and the Super Soul through the finite intermediaries like sound, light and mind. The expression or the suggestion of the great Infinite is Aksharam or the atomic essence or subtle quality of the Divine. This is none other than Parabrahma as celebrated glowingly in Chap 339 of AGNI PURANA;

*"Aksharam paramam brahma sanatana majam vibhum,
Vedamteshu vadamyekam chaitanyam jyotirishvaram."*

Thus as the savant asserts after Sri Samaskra's comment on Brahma Sutra (I, 1, 20, 21), "God is the actual theme of all art." So the art which simply depicts externalities of life photographically, or captures even sensuously only the transitory or the illusive moment, without a faint suggestion of the inherent motif-force actioning between them all, is no art. All highest art is hieratic in its conception and spiritual in its essence, because "the gods are the dreams of the race, in whom its intentions are mostly perfectly fulfilled. From them we come to know its

innermost desires and purposes. Secular and personal art can only appeal to cliques; but a hieratic art unites a whole race in one spiritual feudalism."

IV

Thus far we have concisely considered Dr. Coomaraswamy's metaphysical and comprehensive conception of Art in general and the Indian art in particular. His perception into the ideals and the historicity of the Chinese and Japanese Arts—their peculiar landscapes and figure compositions—is no less true and illuminating. While affirming their parentage from the Indian Art these two children exhibit their own individual traits, the percolation of Confucianism and Taoism into their constitutions. There was no landscape painting in India before the advent of the Persian influence, and even the few backgrounds which have been added to the figure compositions in Raga-mala Series and Ritu Samhara in colours, have been decorative simply, and are justly meant to hit off the figures in the foreground. In other words the depiction of Nature in Indian Painting occupies but a subordinate place. She was not accorded a pre-eminent place or status of her own in any artistic conception. There was even a tendency to look down upon her as more ephemeral and illusive than the humans, although the humans were but a part of her. But in the arts of China and Japan Nature had her own equal, if not a better, place with the humans (Cf. Hiroshige's 'Kiso Mountains in Snow' series, Otamaro's 'Fireflies' for instance), and as the savant has pertly observed, "the Chinese landscape painter's interests are far from topographical; he uses the familiar scenes of lonely mountains and forests to interpret

and communicate a mood, or express a philosophic concept.....In one way he uses Nature's form as the phrases of a philosophical language, likening mountain and mist, dragon and tiger, to the Great Extremes." In Binyon's phraseology, "the life of Nature and of all non-human things is regarded in itself; its character contemplated and its beauty cherished for its own sake, not for its use and service in the life of man. There is no infusion of human sentiment into the pictures of birds and beasts, of the tiger roaring in the solitudes of the hawk and the eagle on the rock crag, rarely is there any touch of the sportsman's interest which has inspired most European pictures of this kind." The Doctor is not slow to grasp or less sensitive to be harped into a poetic utterance of his own or less acute as not to relate these three sister arts of India, China and Japan: "Even the smallest flower, the most trivial insect can thus be represented with such an intensity of vision as to seem a world in itself; and this world is a part of humanity as man is a part of the world by nature. The world of Nature is not merely an object of interest but a perpetual expression of the One Life. This is the 'Sermon of the Wild,' and to be sensitive to these prophecies and intimations is characteristic alike of poetry and painting in the later developments of the Mahayana. Thus in China as in India, but in a different fashion, thought "expressed in art developed from an early hieratic formulation to a representation of the pure transparency of life." Most of the best specimens of the Chinese and the Japanese art like Korin's paintings "sing their own essential beauty" in their own silence and loneliness.

V.

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy is no mere theorist or sophist. His utterances embrace every field of human activity and have the sanctity of the practical wisdom of our sages. He is a traditionalist, not enslaved to tradition. He regards it as distilled experience of persons possessed with acute vision in various walks of life, and as it is entitled to our reverence and adoption, especially when we have no better substitutes. He is of Blake's temperament which exclaimed "Enthusiastic admiration is the first principle of knowledge, and its last." The Doctor defines Art: "To give a clothing, a perfect form to one's thought, is to be an artist.....Art is as much a means of expression as a language, as a behaviour in general; both when sincere, express the character and the pre-occupations of the individuals or race to which they belong." He exhorts us to love art not because "it will bring to us prosperity; rather because it is a high function of our being; a door for thoughts to pass from the unseen to the seen....." He has his own reasons for it. He properly believed that there could be regeneration of India only "through art and not by politics and economics alone." For "a purely material idea will never give to us the lacking strength to build up a great and enduring nation. For that we need ideals and dreams, impossible and visionary, the food of martyrs and of artists." True nationalism which is not avaricious and politically obtrusive, lies only in the emulation of the racial ideals and enthusiastic preservation of its delectable evidence, be it in literature, or painting, or sculpture, or music, or dance. As Dr. Nicholas Roerich put it these are 'Sacred Signs.' Doctor Coomaraswamy's definition of culture betokens

artistic existence in the light of the true Swadesi "which is only a way of looking at life." While Plato as he puts it "identified culture with the capacity for immediate and instinctive discrimination between good and bad workmanship," he explained Plato's definition by including in it, "a certain quality of recollectness or detachment, a capacity for stillness of mind and body,.....and a power of penetrating mere externals in individual men or various races. Culture includes a way of life essentially balanced, where real and false values are not confused; also I think a certain knowledge of, or interest in, things which are not directly utilitarian, which do not merely give pleasure to the senses or confirm a prejudice." This is indeed a restatement of our Scriptures that way. With these standards necessary for correct evaluation of anything, we could easily see the reasons why our present day judgments of men and things which are uncultured are warped, deficient, and purblind. In other words, the genuine critic is he who is as proficient culturally as the creative artist. While the function of the one is to discern the quality, the function of the other is to produce the quality. Speaking of the art-critic or historian he says, "He needs only to be able to recognise truth and life when he sees them. All good art has similar qualities, and so also all bad art is bad in much the same way. But every great cycle of artistic expression has certain characteristics and a particular genius of its own, and expresses certain preoccupations. If the critic's work is to be of any value he must so understand this genius as to be able to trace the evolution of its expression, to define the period of its fullest development, to point to the examples in which its bias is most perfectly expressed."

and above all to correlate its form with the movement of the human spirit that finds expression throughout.

The critic is therefore not a mud-slinger but a judge and a reconstructor in his own manner. In order that we may properly appreciate our art-heritage he prescribes,—“The Indian must see with his own eyes. Two things are needful, one that he should be saturated with the traditional art of the race in order that he may know, **HOW TO SEE**, the other that he be saturated with the traditional culture of the East, that he may know **WHAT TO SEE**—for it would be meaningless to base the decorative art of a people upon rare plant forms, however beautiful, which have not appealed already to the race imagination and have no part in the race life or in their literature.” Thus he directly defines the ‘Function of Schools of Art in India.’ He does not swear at science nor scowl upon it. His ripe mind which has seen the many in the **ONE**, and **ONE** in the many is not walled into compartments. So he says “We need science and above all concrete efficiency; but it is not any science or any efficiency that will help us, only a rational and human science, and efficiency directed to high ends.” Thus he indirectly defines science as a manner of thinking in concrete terms the phenomena of the Finite and the Protean reality of the Infinite. The Hindu temperament which is synthetically essenced sees nothing like the religious, the aesthetic and the scientific standpoints militating against one another; for the Hindus united them all in their finest work, whether musical, literary or plastic; for as the savant says, “The Hindus have never believed in Art for Art’s sake; their Art like that of Mediaeval Europe was an Art for Love’s sake.

VI

To those who denounce Indian Art as being essentially, hieratic, Dr. Coomaraswamy has a very convincing answer to give: "The images of Buddha of Avalokitesvara, of Vishnu, Siva, in their sattvic aspects were intended to represent the nearest likeness to God that art could reach. Now 'expression' as Herbert Spencer puts it, 'is feature in the making.' All these variations of feature constituting that we call 'Expression' represent the departure from the perfect type. The more human in expression, the less does Hindu sculpture approach its own perfection.....Such qualities as nobility, peace, graciousness, which involve in their perfection a superhuman balance of intellect and emotion, can alone be rightly 'Expressed' in a symbol of divine life.....Everywhere the Indian images seem to express, perhaps unconsciously the idea that in all work it is 'but this body' that acts, while the Self, serene, unshaken and unattached, is but a spectator of the drama where itself is manifested as an actor."

"A good painter" says Leonardo Vinci "has two chief objects to paint, namely, Man and the intention of his soul. The first is easy, and the second is difficult. because he has to represent it through the attitudes and movements of the limbs. He should therefore have realised the truth of the abovesaid remark of Ananda Coomaraswamy when he exclaimed, besides, "That figure is most worthy of praise which by its action best expresses the passion that animates it." In the technical aspect of Art there is absolutely nothing to connect the 'goodness' or 'badness' of the informing passion" as the Doctor has properly stressed. In other words, "all art which has any such

conscious purpose is sentimental and the true ethical value of art appears in its quality of detachment and vision." To go a few steps further and in the words of Hsieh Ho (Chinese Painter of the sixth Century A.D.), the artist is only concerned with "whether or not the work exhibits the fusion of the rhythm of the Spirit with the movement of living things." The same test is however emphasized by Mr. C. J. Holmes—a modern critic, in demanding the qualities of Unity, Vitality, Infinity, Repose, for these are "no more or less than the rhythm or economy of the Spirit" and "the presence of this Spirit is Beauty." It is here that Indian Sculpture of Indian gods and goddesses excels all other sculpture in the world.

Judged by the above standards the productions of the Indian modern artists are quite meagre in quality; for they lack woefully the consecration and the lyrical spontaneity of our works of even our Mediaeval India. The Modern Sculpture is any thing but Indian both in spirit and in the manner of execution. The modern Indian Painting suffers also from the same deficiencies, barring a few solitary exceptions from the brushes of people like Nanda Lal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar. The generality are deliberate and rather mawkish. Dr. Coomaraswamy's review of the *Calcutta Paintings*, though dated about 1912, still holds good, and the Bengal Painters have not benefited themselves thereby. While admitting the gracefulness of their lines, he bewails their lack of vitality; and their general quality: "They are often sentimental in conception; weak in drawing and tamasic in colouring. This especially applies to the mythological and heroic subjects. None can portray the gods but those who have themselves seen: to modern India the gods

are shadowy and unreal.....Again the colouring of many of the *Calcutta Pictures*, especially the later Japan-influenced works of Mr. Tagore (Abanindranath Tagore) is muddy in the extreme, and the tones throughout so low as often to make the subject of the picture hard to decipher. This is as far as possible a departure from the pure clean-colour schemes of earlier Indian art, although its vagueness lends charm to the treatment of certain subjects." It is not prejudice nor want of vision that has prompted the above rather sweeping remark of the savant. It is based upon his realisation "of the efficacy of art as an agent of universal synthesis, thus of effective religion," as Dr. Jacques De Marquette has justly observed. Besides, if the artist is an unsullied adorer of the aspect of beauty in the divine he has but to adore it with the most rhythmic line and form, at once glamorous and serene like the very qualities of Beauty, he himself has experienced having become partly divine.

To sum up the achievements of this "towering personality whose Olympian sovereignty was even more impressive than that of the great patrician Tagore," one needs to study his *Art and Swadesi*, *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, and *The Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* to name but an outstanding few. His life was but a "demonstration of the Integration of Art in the process of deification of creation in the return to unity of the Consciousness functioning through the many." In lifting consciousness from the PRATYAKSHA to the PAROKSHA vision Art does not only bring about "the most desirable of all human good in the consummation of inner harmony and through a temporary *Daivam Mithunam* of his lower

and higher natures." His contributions are therefore unique as they all stress 'the deep cultural unity of mankind' through Art. Sylvan Levi has observed with truth, that in his utterances he has carried the common cultural inheritance of mankind to new summits "by the influx of the full values embodied in the *Sanatana Dharma*." It is no praise to him to assert that he helped "to restore to man the full stature of his world-wide citizenship, high above all sectarian racial sectionalisms. We could very well repeat to him the query of Rabindranath Tagore, "My poet, is it thy desire to see thy creation through my eyes?" and answer ourselves with Dr. Cousin's comment, "The artist has in some way given eyes to the Hidden One; the observer looks back through those eyes, and gets through them a glimpse of the Eternal."

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY.

(*Sri B. S. Sitholey, Lucknow.*)

When one comes across a person of such unquestionable genius that he need only be known in order to be revered, one may only state what he has achieved and express gratitude for it.

It has not been my privilege to meet Dr. Coomaraswamy in person, but I wrote to him once, and I treasure his letter in reply for his dignified courtesy and for one of the most important observations on folk-art he has made therein. As a student of his writings since 1910, the more I have known of his mind through them the more has my reverence for him grown. It is impossible not to be impressed by such a master mind—a mind sensitive as the perfectly tuned strings of the *vina*, penetrating, judicious, and

all-understanding. To the detachment of the scientist that he was he added his warm human sympathy. To few it is given to possess such depth of insight into the fundamental and the genuine. His writings bear in the fullest measure the impress of his mind and personality and wisdom.

Dr. Coomaraswamy came providentially at a time when the civilization and culture of India, developed and matured through the ages, were being crushed by the materialistic machine-age outlook. He raised the alarm, told us what had gone wrong and how it could be put right. He saw not only India but the whole world threatened and bent all his energies to fighting the disruptive forces at work. Writing about the renaissance of Indian culture, he observed: "Our problem is not so much of the rebirth of an Indian culture as it is one of preserving what remains of it. This culture is valid for us not so much because it is Indian as because it is culture." Events have proved him to be completely right. With independence gained by methods founded on the old culture and unparalleled in history for their moral elevation, India, choosing the correct path, is to-day the only country in the world whose political ideology rests on spiritual basis. How wonderfully he judged and with what inspiring faith he determined his life-work!

His extensive writings are so important that quotations could be made from almost every page of them, but I have to confine myself, within limitations of space, to giving only a few extracts in order to indicate the inimitable way of his approach to a problem. His interpretations give shape to and express one's own thoughts—an identity which is proof of the validity of the interpretations. To have the fullest

understanding of anything was evidently his prime purpose, as from such understanding alone can the truth be known and right action determined. And because of this his writings are characterized by perfect lucidity, sincerity, expressiveness, and aesthetic purity.

In an essay on education in India he summed up foreign rule in one of the most arresting sentences ever written. "One of the most remarkable features of British rule in India," he wrote, "has been the fact that the greatest injuries done to the people of India have taken the outward form of blessings." We see here the scientist appraising the situation objectively and dispassionately, the patriot and the humanitarian grieved at the wrong done, and the well-wisher pointing out that the "blessings" had only produced, as Lord Macaulay had devised, "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." On India attaining independence, Dr. Coomaraswamy's significant message to us was—"Be Your Self." This, in fact, he has been impressing on us from the very beginning.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was one of the very few in the modern world who rightly asserted that art is a vital part of human life, and not an amusement or an intellectual exercise, being intimately bound up with human emotions, feelings, sentiments, ideals and aspirations, and that to ignore it or to debase it was to reduce oneself to a mere automaton satisfying only the physical and utilitarian wants. His studies and researches had convinced him that the spiritual content of Indian art, a product of the oldest living civilization and culture, was essential not only for India but for the world, and that its preservation and



organic progress were of cardinal importance. He was therefore most anxious that the world should share his experience and knowledge of it and retrieve the values it stood for. Of a Rajput painting ("The Bride") he wrote:

This picture is of most delicate and romantic loveliness and purity. There is a haunting charm in the gentle shyness of the bride as she is led by a friend, perhaps an elder wife, to the bridal chamber. We may almost feel the wild beating of her heart and feel the tremulous touch of her red-stained fingers.....The white marble building glistens in the moonlight. The whole picture bears the spell of that strange serenity and recollectedness, that so distinguish the old life of India, and survive so little in the life of non-rhythmic haste and hideousness into which it is so quickly changing. Perhaps it would not be possible to overvalue an art that brings us so clear a message of calm and peace as do these romantic and religious Hindu paintings—a message from the time which we, taking an external view, sometimes think of as less peaceful and less civilized than our own."

Of Kangra paintings he said that their charm was "all-compelling and almost personal, like the grace of an individual woman." Who is there who has not had at one time or other a glimpse of like beauty in human life, and who will deny that its disappearance will be a grievous blow to mankind? Dr. Coomaraswamy was not a mere accomplished critic of art; he was its most sensitive and accurate interpreter—an interpreter of life itself.

Dr. Coomaraswamy challenged the view of European writers that the Buddha image was a creation of the Greek Gandharan school, and ascribed its origin to the early art of Mathura. He said: "The sculptors of Mathura, on the other hand, had at their

command not only the visual image of the 'Great Person' as defined in the Pali texts, but also the tradition of the standing types of the colossal Yakshas of the latter centuries B.C., and for the seated figure also a tradition of which the beginning must have antedated the Siva types of the Indus Valley culture of the third millennium B.C. The Buddha image came into being because a need had been felt for it, and not because a need had been felt for 'art.' In discerning the truth and bringing it forward Dr. Coomaraswamy has done inestimable service to Indian and world art and culture. It is a familiar Western practice, born of racial bias and a false sense of prestige, to decry Indian achievement or to see European influences in it, without the least consideration that this results in falsifying things. Numerous instances of such bias exist, but one coming from a distinguished person and remarkable for its subtlety, may be cited. Describing Ajanta paintings, Sir John Marshall said: "How much would the world not give for such samples of the painting of Classic Greece?" This sort of outlook is "rooted in something deeper than itself, a whole cultural training, natural or acquired temperament and fundamental attitude towards existence, and it measures, if the immeasurable can be measured, the width of the gulf which till recently separated the oriental and the western mind and most of all the European and Indian way of seeing things."—(Sri Aurobindo Ghose). Other instances are mostly crude and blatantly arrogant; and it was against such prejudices that Dr. Coomaraswamy combatted all his life, not as a partisan but to establish the truth and to restore intellectual honesty. Had it not been for his defence the whole history of Indian art would have

been falsified and a great injury done to Indian culture.

About folk-art Dr. Coomaraswamy in his letter to me from Boston dated October 6, 1935, referred to at the commencement, made the following important observation:

"These folk arts preserve symbolic material that is very ancient and of deep significance—even though this may have been partly forgotten nowadays. The folk art is not really *primitive* or naive in the anthropological sense, but preserves the *primordial* symbolism of the metaphysical tradition—mixed, of course, in some cases with more modern elements."

This dispels many misconceptions and shows the high value of folk art. It becomes apparent that anthropologists and archaeologists as only such are not competent to explain art, and that the art interpreter is required to possess, among many other things, a knowledge of both anthropology and archaeology.

It was Dr. Coomaraswamy who first pointed out the supreme beauty of that great sculpture—Nataraja, the Dancing Siva of the Dravidian South, in his cosmic Tandava dance. It was an eye-opener to the famous sculpture Rodin. Dr. Coomaraswamy drew attention to "the strangely lovely" Prajnaparamita from Java, now in the Rijks Museum, Leiden. This goddess combines the most extraordinary female physical beauty and grace with spirituality and serenity of an order that will perhaps never again be achieved in art. None realised so fully and described so adequately the majesty and grandeur of that sublime sculpture—the Buddha at Anuradhapura. The work of a Gupta sculptor, here the Master's living presence can almost be felt. Who knew of these until Dr. Coomaraswamy explained what they were? Rajput painting may have

Oct. 6. 1935

Dear Mr. Sitholey,

You are quite at liberty to use the illustrations from my Medieval Sinhalese art, with due acknowledgement.

I might call your attention to my article on the Old Indian Vina (harp) in Journal American Oriental Society, Vols. 50 and 51. I am very glad you are writing on these subjects.

Folk art is very important. You doubtless know A.N. Tagore's book, Bāṅglār Vrata which has excellent illustrations. There is room for many more books of the same kind. There folk arts preserve symbolic material that is very ancient and of deep significance — even though this may have been partly forgotten nowadays. The folk art is not really primitive or naive in the anthropological sense, but preserves the primordial symbolism of

the metaphysical tradition — mixed, of course, in some cases with more modern elements.

Please let me know when your book on folk art is published.

Yours very sincerely

Abanindranath Tagore

A letter to Sri B. S. Sitholey



been known, but the understanding we have of it now is owing to him.

By making extensive collections at considerable cost and great personal sacrifice, Dr. Coomaraswamy rescued from oblivion, and possible destruction, many a work of art without which the world would definitely have been the poorer.

Among his many notable achievements, his vindication of Indian images with many arms, and his rational explanation of the erotic element in Indian art, may be mentioned. Prejudiced critics had already seized on these two factors to pour contempt on Indian art by calling it monstrous, lewd, and barbarous; and to-day, leaving out the lesser fry, the almost berserker rage against Indian sculpture of such an otherwise able person as Ruskin seems to be pathological. Dr. Coomaraswamy has finally settled these controversial matters by explaining their metaphysical basis and inevitableness. No critic, unless he wishes to expose his ignorance and make himself ridiculous, can now take his stand on the kind of criticism of Indian art which had become fashionable with European writers.

What Dr. Coomaraswamy perceived of that difficult art, Indian music, had not been dreamt of by anybody else at any time; as such, it was a unique example of profound insight and the completest understanding. He observes:

"This music is essentially impersonal: it reflects an emotion and an experience which are deeper and wider and older than the emotion or wisdom of any single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation and it is passionate without any loss of serenity."

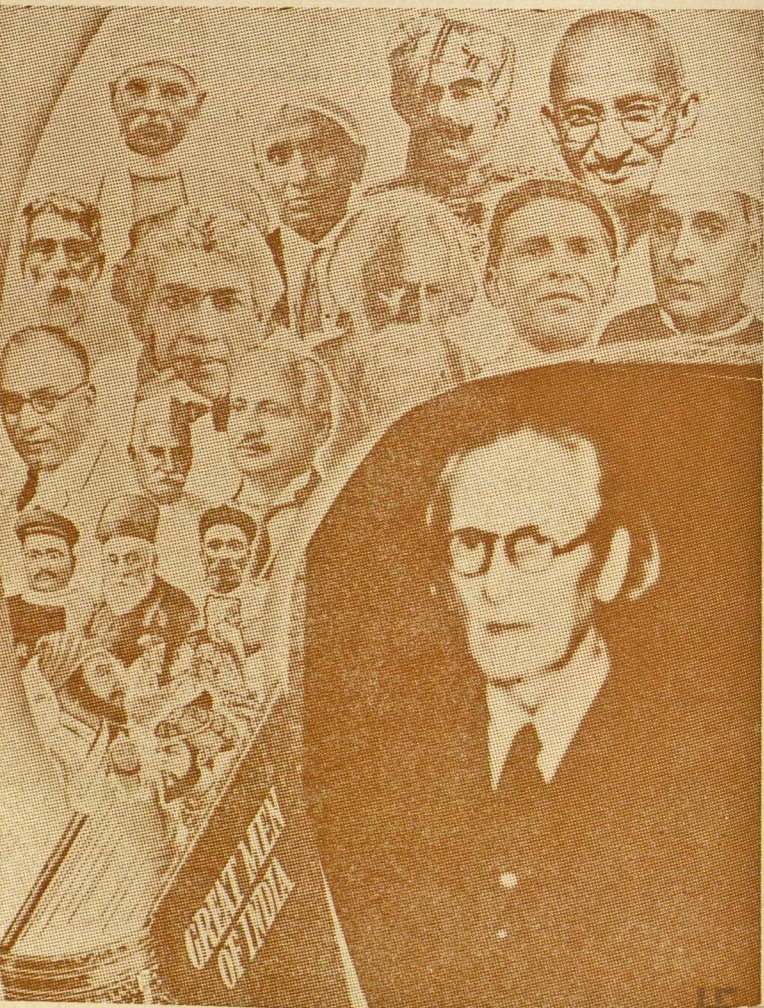
Music is practically as old as humanity, yet even the subtlest thinkers did not realize that it was imper-

sonal, that its sorrow, joy and passion were, in the nature of things, of a different quality from that felt by an individual, and that notwithstanding these everyone sees in it his own thought before him. This perception is by itself sufficient to place Dr. Coomaraswamy among the greatest thinkers of all time. Its profundity is difficult to realize ordinarily, for experience of a lifetime is needed to understand the implications. And it opens up unconceived psychological and metaphysical vistas. Such achievement is beyond the capacity of mere critics or ordinary intellectuals.

Dr. Coomaraswamy collected and translated a number of songs from Rajputana, Panjab and Kashmir. He pointed out that representing poetry of a very high order, they furnished themes to which only Indian music could do justice, and that such songs needed to be preserved.

It is said that in modern times India has produced only three or four exponents of philosophy possessing the widest outlook. Dr. Coomaraswamy, being one of them, had an advantage over the others in being a scientist, and with his wider interests and accomplishments he was certainly comparatively the better equipped. Moreover, his approach was also through channels which the others did not avail of. And, as usual with him, he left the mark of his erudition and wisdom on whatever he undertook.

He espoused the cause of Indian freedom and, happily, lived to see India become independent. His fight was many sided and not in the manner of the politician, his aim being to secure not only political freedom but intellectual, moral and cultural freedom as well, so that Indians may be truly Indian and worthy to inherit the



Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy
amongst the Great Men of
India.

magnificent and noble culture of India. His remarkable modesty and self-effacement prevented his becoming known except to a restricted circle, the circle of thinking men who count. But he was a greater patriot than many advertised ones, working sincerely, unostentatiously, with faith and wisdom and sustained endeavour. He was among the chief makers of India.

Indian art and culture owe so heavy a debt to Dr. Coomaraswamy that it is impossible to repay it. He was a pathfinder and more: he has said practically the last word on many aspects of Indian art. Since the West began to feel the weight of his interpretations, supported by fact and text and incontrovertible logic, a lush crop of self-styled authorities on Indian art has sprung up both in India and elsewhere, distinguished more for plagiarism and preoccupation with minor details than for insight and understanding. Dr. Coomaraswamy's writings, and Mr. E. B. Havell's on architecture, will continue to be the only trustworthy guides for the understanding of Indian art.

Distance and legend and propaganda have accustomed us to the belief that geniuses appeared only in bygone ages, but Nature knows of no such line of demarcation. The genius of Dr. Coomaraswamy will probably emerge superior to that of many a great one of the past. Future generations will realize the greatness of this illustrious Indian* with a clarity and

*Born in Ceylon of an English lady, the wife of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, and educated in England, Dr. Coomaraswamy is regarded by some as a Ceylonese, by others as an Englishman, and not an Indian. This view is wrong. The people of Ceylon, apart from the aborigines, are ethnically and culturally Indian, being the descendants of South Indians and inheriting the civilization and culture of India. Political divisions, the circumstance of history, cannot override fundamentals: Ceylon and Nepal are as much India as any part of the peninsula.

definition denied, owing to extreme nearness, to us. To understand and be one's Self is the highest man can aspire to; and Dr. Coomaraswamy by his own life-work dedicated to these ends which he succeeded in achieving, has brought about a thinning of the veil. The gratitude of mankind to this astonishingly versatile genius of exceptional calibre and humanistic outlook can never be adequate.

A distinguished Professor has expressed the wish that "if ever a Nobel Prize is instituted for Aesthetics, it should first go to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy." I respectfully suggest that Dr. Coomaraswamy's merits were above the highest prize that could ever be instituted. He would have preferred, were it possible, to be unknown, living, as he will, in the hearts and minds of men by his solid achievement.

A TRIBUTE

(Sri Gurdial Mallick, Bombay).

My humble, but most heartfelt tribute to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy is in silence, or at least in a solitary sentence:—God's wonderful rainbow-coloured creation stood dumb till the critic, in the divine form of man, witnessed it and made it unbosom and articulate itself in bewitching beauty.

A NEIGHBOR'S TRIBUTE

(Mr. Henry Tweed Farmer, Needham, Mass., U.S.A.)

At least once in every life-time we meet an unforgettable person. The one that I have in mind is my late neighbor Ananda Coomaraswamy. Our mutual interest in plants and gardening perhaps was a basis on which our acquaintance flourished. No plant or vine or flower was too insignificant for his care and

attention. Even the lowly weed was allowed to flourish if it had blossomed bravely for its symmetry and design. Any unusual or beautiful flower in his conservatory brought me an invitation to tea, to share its beauty.

Another mutual interest we shared was his young son. He was an appealing youngster of eight when we first met. Another, his dog a beautiful cocker spaniel. At one time the Doctor called me by telephone and an anxious voice asked me kindly not to feed his dog, who had not been well; at another time it was the small boy that should not have sweets. Naturally I was glad to co-operate with this kind and gentle soul, whose every thought was for the welfare of his household.

The doctor could not have accomplished the vast amount of work that he did had it not been for his wife. She smoothed the way, shielded him from petty annoyances, made him comfortable, drove him back and forth to the Museum, and in myriad ways made it possible for him to work without interruptions.

THE PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS

(*Mr. Gerald Heard, California, U.S.A.*)

Those who are interested in Vedanta and the West are naturally always on the look-out for the rising of one more of those bridges which must, in this generation of birth-and-death, make possible a new understanding between men of good will in East and West. For, speaking as a Westerner—and it is a judgment with which an Oriental would doubtless agree—the

state of our Occidental culture today much resembles that critical path into which the older West found itself precipitated in the second century of the Christian era. Then, an Oriental religion, the last of many Oriental competitors for the prize of the Roman Empire, had begun to win converts in a surprising way. The Imperial Court was interested, a possible heir to the throne was found to be involved: neither patrician nor slave was safe from the contagion of the new faith. But faith without a frame of reference is always a wine without a bottle. As we know, the frame of reference for Christianity, the form in which that faith became the philosophy and culture known as Christendom, was found in Greek thought. With that amalgam the world in the West remains content until today. Now in our generation that system has reached exhaustion, no longer answering the intellectual questions of men nor giving a sanction to their propriety. Hence our crisis. And, once again, at the moment of crisis, out of the East has come a light and a faith—or perhaps we should say that, though the light is one, it has come and is coming to us like a rainbow a thing not only of hope but of many colors.

This brief note is to draw the attention of others similarly interested, who may not have come across this particular thinker, to the work of Dr. Coomaraswamy. For some time, thoughtful people have been gathering the articles of this writer. They reveal an immense scholarship which is not only thoroughly at home in our Western religious and philosophical thought but which shows its relevance and illumination through the Light from Asia. Dr. Coomaraswamy is the curator of Oriental Art at the Boston Museum

of Fine Art. He has, therefore, the entree to minds which would not otherwise listen to his words about religion—for culture can still command respect in our decadent West where cultus is despised. Dr. Coomaraswamy has used this approach to show us of the West that we cannot really understand art, still less hope to produce it. Until we understand that it can only spring from a profoundly religious point of view. In his searching essay, *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* which appeared in the magazine *Asia*, he points out that when we collect works of art we kill what we would preserve, like uneducated children tearing up wild flowers. And he points out that we ourselves really know this, for, until the smash came, the demand of the tourist was to find a place which he called "unspoilt"—viz., a place where his own "culture" had not yet penetrated. He adds that the words "to spoil" mean not only to ruin but also to loot.

But it is to an essay which has lately appeared in book form that the rest of these remarks must be devoted. This small booklet is called *Hinduism and Buddhism*. The point of view is that of the Hinayana school of philosophy. But the author, by taking that position, does not wish to oppose it to the Mahayana form.

The greater and the lesser vehicle can both travel along the noble eight fold path. What he is concerned to show is that Buddhism and Hinduism are not in conflict: the one is a development out of the massive foundation of the other. Still further, Dr. Coomaraswamy wishes to show—and certainly his scholarship would seem to sustain it—that the essentials of Christianity, of Buddhism in its two forms, and of

Hinduism are one. Here is the *Philosophia Perennis*, here the Eternal Gospel.

History does not repeat itself but it does recapitulate, and the themes sounded earlier are found in the vast orchestration of life coming back time and again with new and fuller harmonization. So is it with East and West in this matter of religion. Today we shall not repeat in any detail the great syncretistic effort of the second century. But, on a larger scale, we shall see another blending of East and West. The original element in this new blending will be, as Dr. Coomaraswamy has pointed out, not a borrowing, indeed not a real syncretism, but a recognition of a common thought manifesting its power under different forms. As he says, the great religions do not so much borrow from each other as all draw from a basic philosophy, a way of life, an apprehension of reality which has been there all the while but which we have forgotten. This realization that ignorance is our greatest mistake and fault is of course a thought which the East has stressed more than the West, but, if it is true, then what the East can do for the West is not so much to convert it, still less to make it adopt its forms, as to remind it of the truth which it knows but has forgotten and let drop to the back of its mind.

It is here that we return to the thought of such perennial teaching—that it is in the life lived, in the fruit of the tree of religion that its power to propaganda resides. Religions may appear because they are strange and subtle in their philosophy or rich and colorful in their rituals. They will only last if they can alter the quality of character. The practical man

makes that his test. It is also the test given by Christ and by Buddha. Dr. Coomaraswamy points out how this Eternal Gospel has a stark simplicity and a total demand. He quotes repeatedly that telling statement of Eckhart, as summing up all the truth: "The Kingdom of God belongs only to the thoroughly dead." The doctrine of being born again by dying to the self—the teaching of the story of the pearl of great price: that everything must be given for it—this to him is the perennial philosophy. It is always being overlaid and mistaken. So, when we have let it be lost, the East comes to us again to remind us that there is a commandment greater even than the commandment to love your neighbour—which we have thought to be the last word of morality. The first commandment comes first, not only because it is first by its very nature but because, unless it is practiced first, the second can never be fulfilled. Otherwise, our love for our neighbour will remain only a slogan and when we try to put it into practice we shall in fact start liquidating him—because, in the form in which he actually appears, we really detest him. The first commandment is, then, the guarantee, the only possible sanction for the second, the only possible power which can give "The Social Gospel" any virtue to redeem mankind. Some may say: "Why do we need yet another voice to tell us that, why do we require the same light thrown from another angle?" The fact remains that a new voice often awakes us when we are drowsing under the repetition of the truth spoken to us in familiar terms. Further, Hinduism is also teaching the West that, since "All roads lead to God" men have to find that road which suits best

their nature. Catholicism helps some, hinders others: Vedanta likewise. Here in Dr. Coomaraswamy's rendering of *Hinayana* is still another way of reaching the same goal.

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MY GURU

(*Sri Mukandi Lal, B.A., (Oxon), Bareilly, India*)

My Guru, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy came on the scene when he was needed most. India had been aroused from its political slumber by Lord Curzon's partitioning Bengal. A nation wide agitation was set on foot by Surrendranath Banerji and other patriots. We the students, then at schools and colleges, were stirred; and participated in the Swadesi movement. I had become a blind lover of every thing Indian, good or bad, simply because it was Indian. I bought heaps of oleograph reproductions (imported from Germany) of Ravi Varma's paintings of Indian Gods and Goddesses and heroes and heroines and scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat*. I collected them and decorated the walls of my room because they were *Indian pictures*. But the appreciation of true Indian art, at the time, was at the lowest ebb, as pointed out by Sir William Rothenstein: "*Indian Fine art has waited long and patiently at the turnstile of the house of fame.....certain aspects of the art of India repelled the western mind.....The elephant headed Ganesh, the many armed Durga, the three headed Brahma, the monkey Gods and the incarnation of Siva and Vishnu seemed to*"

outrage all accepted canons of beauty. The familiar forms represented on many of the temples appeared ugly and sexual compared with classical and medieval figures in European churches to which Englishmen were accustomed....." Sir William added "Nor do Indians themselves understand the nobility of their own artistic inheritance, or the obligations this great legacy imposes on them." This was so because in the words of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh "we had been cut off by a mercenary and soulless education from all our ancient roots of culture and tradition; it was corrected only by the stress of imagination, emotion and spiritual delicacy, submerged but not yet destroyed in the temperament of the people. At this time, the first decade of the twentieth century, Mr. E. B. Havell the Principal of the Government Art School, Calcutta and Sri Abanindranath Tagore demonstrated to the world what a great heritage India had. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy had come under the influence of Burne-Jones and John Ruskin who were then leading a revolt against Cubism, Impressionism and Realism in modern art in England. Burne-Jones said, "Impressionists do not make beauty, they do not make design, they do not make idea, they do not make anything but atmosphere." John Ruskin said, "The object of art must be either to please or to exalt; one is a petty reason, the other a noble one."

Dr. Coomaraswamy's four years stay in Ceylon from 1903 to 1906 as Director of Mineralogical Survey, gave him an opportunity to study the arts and crafts of India and Ceylon. He paid visits to South India and Calcutta to see Mr. Havell and the Tagore brothers. He resigned from the service of the Ceylon Govern-

ment and went back to England to complete his works *History of Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* and *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*. He made up his mind to devote his life to the revival, regeneration, and interpretation of Indian art. He had seen from close quarters India's struggle for Freedom and he soon published a pamphlet *The Deeper Meaning of the Struggle* in November 1907. It was such patriotic sentiments and feelings of my *Guru* which attracted me first to him; and I longed to meet him. I remember distinctly having read one article or speech of his in the *Ceylon National Review* in which he had condemned the westernisation of India. He also started writing to the *Modern Review* which had been started just about this time (in 1907) by Ramananda Chatterji at Allahabad.

I had read all what Dr. Coomaraswamy had written before I met him in the autumn of 1908 at the house of my class-mate and closest friend Sriprakasa.* We were both students at the Banaras Hindu College, the nucleus of the present Banaras (Hindu) University. Dr. Coomaraswamy had come to Banaras from Calcutta after seeing the Tagore brothers. He stayed, at Banaras, with Dr. Bhagwan Das, the greatest living savant and scholar of India, father of Sriprakasa. I seized upon this opportunity and daily sat at my *Guru's* feet to learn of the mysteries of Indian art—its ideals, its beauty, and its greatness. Dr. Coomaraswamy convinced me that the "Indian Art" of Ravi Varma which I was then admiring

* Sriprakasa and I were again together in England in 1913 and 1914. He was High Commissioner for India in Pakistan, Governor of Assam; and is now a Cabinet Minister in India.



—Sketch by Sri Nandalal Bose.

“Studio of Dr. Abanindranath Tagore in Jorasanko, Calcutta.”

[The time of the sketch dates back to a mid-day of about 1910 or 1911, when Sri Nandalal Bose was busy in a discussion on Art with Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. The three other figures are the three well-renowned brothers Sri Samarendranath Tagore, Sri Gaganendranath Tagore and Dr. Abanindranath Tagore.]



was not really Indian. He pointed out the vulgarity of Ravi Varma's art and of the harmonium, both of which had found places in almost all homes of educated Indians. Ravi Varma's *Art* was setting up false non-Indian and vulgar unartistic ideals before the people just as the harmonium was killing and vulgarising Indian music. He convinced me that Ravi Varma's art was not really Indian and national art. Models for gods and goddesses and heroes and heroines painted by Ravi Varma were common men and women who found themselves, in situations for which they lacked dignity and divinity. His pictures were such as any European could paint after a superficial study of Indian dresses and literature. He said Ravi Varma's gods and goddesses, in spite of their many arms, and extra heads were very human and that too not of noble type. He told me the ideal artist for India was Abanindranath Tagore who followed the ideals, aims and canons of Indian art and who was training a group of young Indians after the tradition of Indian art. I became a convert. I discarded Ravi Varma and installed Abanindranath as my hero and ideal artist. I wanted to see him and his paintings and how he painted real Indian pictures. My *Guru* gave me his second class return ticket to Calcutta (as he had made up his mind to go to seats of ancient art instead of to the home of Modern art). So as soon as I answered the last question paper for the intermediate examination I went to Calcutta to see the founder of the Modern School of Indian Painting with Dr. Coomaraswamy's letter of introduction. The Tagore brothers (Gaganendranath, Samnendranath and Abanendranath) lived jointly at their Jorasanko palatial houses off Chitpur Road surrounded by trea-

tures of Indian art. They put me up as their guest for ten days in the room adjoining their drawing room cum art-gallery. During my stay with the Tagore brothers at Jorasanko I read books on art such as *Ideals of Indian Art* by Havell which had just then been published. I looked at their marvellous collection of Indian art. I watched Abanendranath Tagore paint and train his early out-standing batch of pupils, Nand Lal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, Venktappa, Derburman, Roy Chaudhary, Chingtai, Surrendra Gangoly and Iswari Prasad. Since I paid frequent visits to this temple of art every year and then in the last one year (1912-13) I was in constant, almost daily, contact with the Tagore brothers. This personal contact was interrupted by my departure for England in July 1913. My introduction to the Bengal School was of great help to me—in the understanding and appreciation of Indian art. The elder Tagore—(Gagnendranath) made a portrait—sketch of my *Guru* (Dr. Coomaraswamy) and one of myself, and gave them to me. From Banaras Dr. Coomaraswamy went about India in search of Indian art treasures; and he also delivered lectures on Indian art and wrote articles to Indian periodicals. To encourage Indian craftsmen's guilds he offered a prize of Rs. 250/- for the best essay on the Guild of the weavers of Banaras. I studied their guilds' organisation and their work and wrote an essay, which won me his prize and was published in the *Modern Review*.

Having passed the Intermediate Examination with Sriprakasa from Banaras Hindu College I came to Allahabad, in 1909. Again for two years I was in close touch with Dr. Coomaraswamy. He was placed in charge of the Fine Art Section of the great



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Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy
(By the late Sri Gogendranath Tagore, September, 1909)



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

Allahabad "All India Exhibition of 1910." I assisted him at the Exhibition. I secured specimens of Garhwal School of Painting for the Exhibition; and I introduced to him Balak Ram (a great-great-grandson of Mola Ram). From Balak Ram he bought six pictures of Mola Ram's collection, which are now in the Boston Museum, and four of which are reproduced in *Rajput Painting Vol. II* (Plates LIV A, LVIII, LXV and LXXIV B).

He encouraged me to go on with the research in Garhwal School, on which I have now almost completed my work after 40 years study and research of this School and Mola Ram's art.* I am dedicating my book on Garhwal School of Painting to my *Guru*

When I was learning all I could from my *Guru* Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and was assisting him in the work of the Exhibition, Sir William Rothenstein, the great Orientalist and artist came to Banaras. He was a great friend of my *Guru*. He asked me to go to Banaras to show the ghats, temples and the sadhus to Sir William Rothenstein. About my first meeting him at Banaras, Rothenstein writes in his "*Men and Memories 1900-1922*" p. 245:—

"One day a youth from Allahabad, named Mukandi Lal, sought me out. He was a student from the University there who had been sent to look after me (by Dr. Coomaraswamy). He meant, he said, to devote his life to serving his country. Yet while he was speaking there arose a clamour—a tongawallah was trying to brow-beat some villagers he had brought

* "Garhwal School of Paintings" is being published serially in the *Ruplekha* of Delhi, and will be republished, enlarged, in book form; and my "Study of Mola Ram's Art and Life" is all typed awaiting some enterprising publisher.

into the town. 'But can one devote oneself to a whole country?' I asked 'why not begin by helping these poor people who are being exploited.' Help them he did and was the happier for his action." I took Rothenstein to Saranath. I showed him the temples, streets and the ghats of Banaras. He used to paint the sadhus, the pilgrims, the ghats and the temples and I used to stand by and watch him paint. One afternoon while Sir William was drawing a sketch of a sadhu and I was standing by, Sri O. C. Gangoly came upon the scene and I introduced him to Sir William Rothenstein.

At Banaras, while I was acting as a guide to Rothenstein I met Justice Sir John Woodroffe of the Calcutta High Court. He was keenly interested in Indian culture and was studying the Tantric lore, on which subject he wrote some instructive and learned books. He was interested in my ideas on art and took keen interest in me ever since. Since whenever I went to Calcutta to see the Tagore brothers and stayed with them, I used to meet Sir John Woodroffe, Percy Brown (the successor of Mr. Havell, Principal of the Calcutta Art School) who used to come to see the Tagores frequently. I heard them discuss art. All this meant education in Indian art and culture for me. I saw much more of Sir John Woodroffe later during my stay at Calcutta, as a student of the City College for one year (1912-13).

While at Allahabad (1910-11) my *Guru* had started working on his monumental work—*Raj-put Painting*. I used to help him in translating and interpreting old Hindi texts connected with and about the pictures he was writing about. During the early summer of 1911 after the exhibition was over

he went to Kashmir with his second wife, Ratan Devi (an English lady) who was then learning Indian music. He asked me to join him in Kashmir during my vacation. I spent May and June, two months, in Kashmir with him. This visit and stay with him in the house-boat at Srinagar provided me further opportunity, from close quarters, to learn all about Indian art. He continued his research in Rajput Art and Himalayan (Pahari) School, in Kashmir. I continued helping him in the work. After I left him in Kashmir he went about visiting the centres of Pahari art and collected further materials for his work on Rajput art. This visit of mine to Kashmir, in 1911, as a student (which I owed to my *Guru*) enabled me to see the people of Kashmir in their homes and their beautiful country. On my return I wrote a series of articles on *Kashmir and Kashmiris* in the *Modern Review* in 1912-1913, which may one day be published in book form. Apart from his research in Rajput Art and visit to centres of Indian art during his stay in India he delivered lectures on Indian art at colleges illustrated by lantern slides.

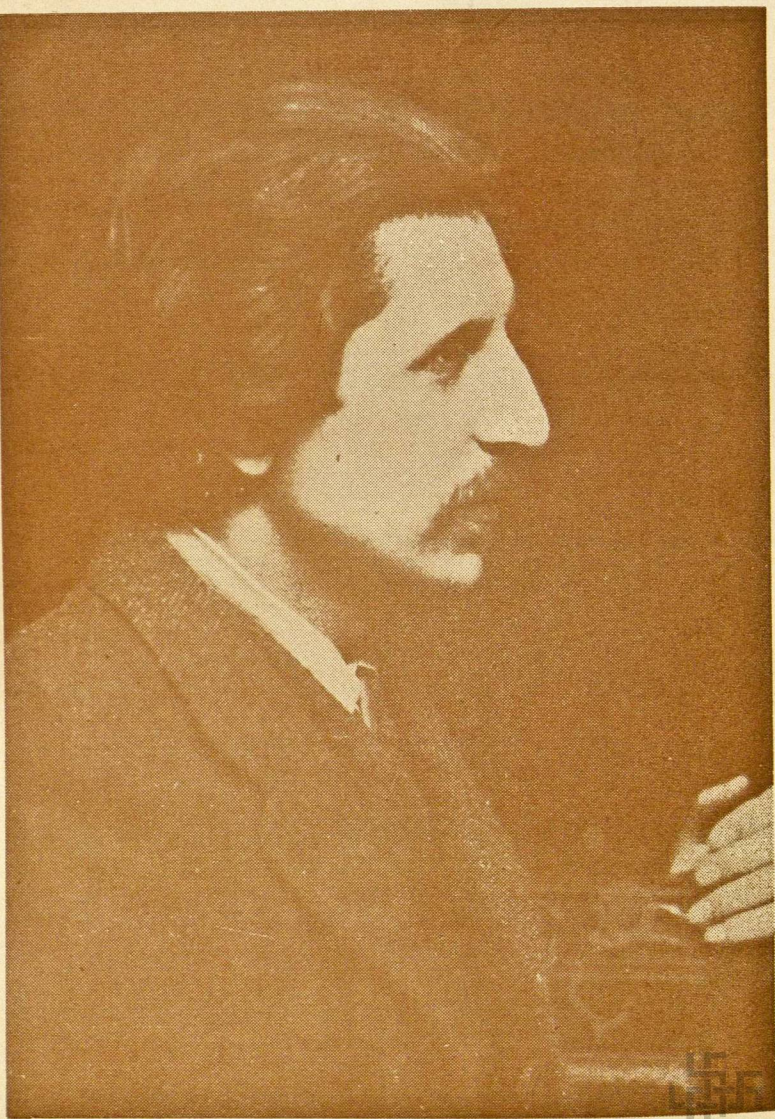
During my sojourn in England (September 1913 to March 1919) I saw quite a lot of him and often stayed with him in his country house and at his flat in London until he left for America in 1917. I continued helping him in the preparation of his *Rajput Paintings Vol. I and II*. He acknowledged my services in the *Rajput Art Vol. I* (text) in the following words "I also wish to acknowledge my debt to Mr. Mukandi Lal for constant assistance in the interpretation of Hindi texts." (Acknowledgment Vol. I). When in 1917 he went to the United States of America, I was

deprived of the privilege of personal touch with my *Guru* but he used to write to me occasionally. He again came to India in 1925-26 to collect paintings and sculptures for the Boston Museum. I met him at Lucknow where I was then attending the Session of the then U.P. Council (now Assembly) and of which I was elected Deputy President.

My discipleship continued as I read all he wrote on Indian art and followed his theories and expositions of Indian art; and communicated the same to others whenever I got an opportunity to do so by lecturing and writing on Indian art. His *Essays in National Idealism* and *Art and Swadesi* did much more for the revival and appreciation of Indian art than any other work on art. I had heard and read some of his lectures and essays collected in these books, during my discipleship and after. I was attracted to him by his love for things Indian. He influenced my life and way of living as nobody else did. My understanding and appreciation of Indian art is everlasting.

In the field of art if he had done no more than publish the *Rajput Art*, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, the *Transformation of Nature in Art* and the *Dance of Shiva* that in itself would have secured him the foremost place amongst the art critics and art historians of the world. If we Indians were to express our gratitude to him and show our appreciation of his work we would name our National Art Gallery or National Museum after him.

His first message to us was in a book which he issued (275 copies of 22 pages), printed in hand made paper, in 1908 May, from England, before



**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy
(about 1915).**

he came to India, under the caption of *Aims of Indian Art*. He gave me an autographed copy of this book. I completed its translation, (as I find it from an endorsement on the last page), into Hindi, at 1 a.m. on 30th December, 1917, in London, on the eve of his departure for the United States where his talents, ability and vast knowledge of Indian Art were appreciated.

MY REMINISCENCES

(*Dr. Bhagavan Das, Banaras*)

I am in my 83rd year. Memory has become slippery, especially as regards dates; though events stand out in vividly visualised scenes before the mind's eye. I believe I first saw Coomaraswamy in one of the houses standing on the grounds of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, Banaras. We were introduced to each other. This was in October or November, 1910. He had read some of my books and expressed appreciation of them. He was interested in fine arts of all kinds, old pictures of Moghul School and Rajput School, Kashmir shawls, old bronzes etc., and wished to attend the Exhibition which was to take place in the winter of 1910-1911 in Allahabad. I invited him to stay with me. He came and stayed with me for some six weeks going to Allahabad often to visit the Exhibition, as did I also. I am not sure, but I think his wife was with him also, there. He came to Banaras again in 1916 I believe. He wanted very much to get a post in the Banaras Hindu University, as Professor of Indian Art and Culture.

But it was not possible to get him one. So he went back to U.S.A. where he had already been appointed as Curator of the Boston Museum. I cannot remember having seen him again. We exchanged letters infrequently and irregularly. He used to send me copies of his Museum *Bulletin* from time to time. He had carried away with him four pictures of Moghul and Rajasthan Schools, selected from a portfolio of these in the possession of my younger brother Shri Sitaram. He wished to purchase this outright, but my brother was not willing to part with them for they were an heirloom. Soon Coomaraswamy reproduced this in a book on Indian Art—of which he sent a copy to me—and returned the pictures. I now think that he did come to India once again, after Mahatma Gandhi's Non-co-operation movement began. He took away, as a present from me, many issues of the *Vedic Magazine* (a monthly issued by the Arya Samaj Gurukula of Kangri—now Kanakhal) in which a series of valuable articles on *The Philosophy of Indian Engineering* had been published by Shri K. V. Vaze of Nasik—an engineer who had retired from Government service. He sent me one or two small pamphlets afterwards, in which he referred to some of my books.

THE AMBASSADOR ABROAD

(*Sri Adris Banerji, Banaras Museum, Banaras, India*).

Far away from his native palmgroves where the surging surf of the Indian ocean thundered and spouted at the feet of Adam's peak Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy settled down. He was not to hear again the parrot chirp and the cuckoo sing amidst the graceful and tall cocoanut trees, with its eternal

nectar; and the Sinhalese maidens with their multi-coloured *saris* going to the *viharas* to worship the *tathagata*. He had lived and felt for them. His heart beats had pulsated at their lost horizon. He and his father had regretted the loss of rhythm, poise and colour in their lives and fought successfully for their resurrection. He purchased a small villa in a matter of fact ultra-modern Boston suburb and lived there the rest of his days. But neither distance nor environment, could deny to him the pleasures and pursuits of life, which he was determined to follow. There were fresh worlds to discover and new horizons to explore. Here, far away from the noisy throngs of the great American cities, the sage of Ceylon immersed himself in ancient Nordic myths like Volsund, Icelandic Eddas, the writings of Plato and Plotinus and works of the mediaeval European scholasticism like Meister Eckhart and Thomas Aquinas. With his insight and intuition he discovered the fundamental unity underlying all religions. His researches in Christian monastic philosophy won for him fresh laurels so beautifully summed up in his *Paths that lead to the same summit*.

In his life long meandering amidst literature,* art, and philosophy of the nations Dr. Coomaraswamy

*A. K. Coomaraswamy received higher education in the University College, London; and curious as it may seem, in a scientific subject—Geology, in which he ultimately obtained a D.Sc. twice in this century, we have seen two great personalities trained in scientific subjects earning universal applause as a litterateur. The first of these was Coomaraswamy and the second is Pandit Jawharlal Nehru. While Dr. Coomaraswamy tapped the dammed up unfathomable waters of religion, philosophy, mythology, and art, Pandit Nehru brought about a new thought epoch in the writing of autobiography and approach in the writing of history as a dynamic process of thinking.

had like the ancient rishis become too well-versed in the Brahmanical *Vedas*, *Brahmanas*, *Upnishads*, *Vedanta* and *Puranas*; but like Max Muller and Rhys Davids had drunk deeply from the eternal springs of Buddhist *Vinaya*, *Nikayas*, *Tripitakas*, *Suttanta* and *Abhidhamma*. He had also become a master of the Jain canonical texts. Therefore after 1934, he devoted his energies to the interpretation of Vedic thought and symbolism. His *New Approach to the Vedas*, *Inverted Tree*, *Angels and Titans*, *The Vedic Doctrine of Silence*, were like new fountains that gushed out from an ancient spring. His interpretation of Vedic symbolism was most appreciated. Because, his work went to show that the Indian tradition is the essential truth, nevertheless, it was not an unique statement of the universal truth. His position was more that of an orthodox Hindu than that of a painstaking modern scholar. Just as the youthful Coomaraswamy, in a different age and different region of the earth, had striven for the resurrection of the Ceylonese life; in the well-earned dusk of a life spent in the pursuit of knowledge, he wanted to bring back to the Indians, maddened with gutter politics and striving for the poison fruit of the 'Industrial Revolution,' the courage of convictions based on their traditions, the *adhyatmic* basis of life, as well as the fact, that the truth of the oldest text could be demonstrated by the most vigorous modern methods.

One of the most charming feature of this great mind was the complete forgetfulness of his own greatness. Scholastic snobbery is a dangerous and vicious quality, but the seer of Indian renaissance in the West was completely free from it. The great Dr.

Coomaraswamy, with his flowing beard, shallow brown complexion, poring over the accumulated learning of the two hemispheres, knew no such complex. Young and old, could approach him, write to him and what is more criticize his theories. There was always a gracious understanding, sympathy and word of encouragement for all. To him every publication, be it a sumptuous volume, or a small contribution however meanly printed and whatever the standing of the writer, had some value. He would take his views as seriously as that of any Harvard or Cambridge Professor with an inter-national reputation.

Indian researches in those days were sharply divided in two camps over the question whether the lowest member of the Mauryan capitals were lotus or the Iranian Bell. In 1930 a select band of young Indians used to congregate in the room of the late R. P. Chanda in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, where the deceased gentleman, in spite of all his stern school masterly code was a great attraction. Amongst them was A. K. Mitra (now Dr. A. K. Mitra of the Department of Anthropology), who had accompanied Chanda to Sarnath, Mathura and Khiching excavations. While in training under him Dr. Mitra published a paper questioning Dr. Coomaraswamy's identifications of the base of the Capital as 'Lotus.' A copy was sent to the *savant* for his opinion. A lesser mortal would have probably taken to silence and contemptuous treatment of the publication. I have seen many Indian scholars having recourse to this method. Not so however the scholar of Boston — verily he was a 'gurudeva' who sympathised with the daring of

this unknown fame. He published a long and patient contradiction of Dr. Mitra's contentions, and what is more presented him with all copies of his publications.

In 1930, I published a very short account of the beautiful Paramara Temples, at a place called Nema-war, in the Indore State and had the audacity to send him a copy. Months had elapsed and I myself had forgotten it, when one morning sitting in my Calcutta house, I was very much surprised to find an envelope from Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Opening it I found a letter in a few lines from the greatest authority on Indian Art and Architecture. "You have developed an undoubted insight into the real spirit of the subject. It is a pleasure to observe such hereditary aptitude for research." Since, till 1942, I have often corresponded with him on every conceivable subject, I only wish that the hooligans who burnt my father's library in Calcutta in 1946 had spared those letters.

Dr. Coomaraswamy had the intuition to catch the underlying significance of oriental design and sculpture. He was probably the first scholar to realise the fundamental unity underlying the aesthetics of the East. The result was his *Dance of Shiva, Visvakarma, History of Indian Art and Indonesian Art*. Particularly, in the last, his treatment of a varied subject which called for encyclopaedic knowledge, was so brief yet meticulous, but full of understanding of the contacts and reactions of the various schools of Indian sculpture on each other vis a vis sculpture in *Great India*, that one regrets the disappearance of the volume in the market.

FROM "THE VEGETARIAN NEWS."

(Mr. Roy Walker, London).

"No biographical details" was the condition Dr. Coomaraswamy made for granting an interview to the writer of one of the last articles about him to appear in an English periodical, the *Aryan Path*, and because he consistently shunned publicity his name is probably unfamiliar to many of our readers. One of our most gifted artists, the late Eric Gill, said of him: "I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding." This tribute from a Roman Catholic sculptor to a Hindu interpreter of art need startle nobody. The son of a Hindu barrister and scholar and an English lady, and himself married to an Argentine scholar and linguist, Dr. Coomaraswamy was physically as well as spiritually a man in whom Eastern and Western spiritual traditions dwelt in living unity. He wrote of classical Oriental art and of the art and thought of Mediaeval Europe with equal insight, revealing and identity beneath the apparent diversities of time and place, and rehabilitating for modern understanding significances of which we had almost lost sight and knowledge.

At the age of seventy, Dr. Coomaraswamy was still working every day of the week from seven in the morning until ten at night, and was author of more than sixty books and monographs, some of which have been published in Britain by Luzac. They are miracles of concentrated exposition. Perhaps Dr. S. Chandrasekhar the interviewer—is right in saying they are "like terse mathematical formulas, far beyond the comprehension of even the intelligent lay reader" but

they are also the polar opposite of pedantry, for all their erudition they are “a living experience and not just an academic discipline”—which was Coomaraswamy’s own criterion of fruitful endeavour. Only as living experience, he taught, as knowledge in the fullest sense, can civilisation be understood.

As seen last year in Massachusetts, where he was for many years Curator of the Museum of Fine Arts, Coomaraswamy was “a slim and stately figure of six feet two inches, his crop of flowing white hair, clear olive complexion, prominent nose and short grey beard—a combination of Mahatma Gandhi and Bernard Shaw.” (Gandhi he judged “the man of the age—our age the only unpurchasable man in the world.”) Like Gandhi and Shaw, Coomaraswamy was a vegetarian on cultural grounds. A boarder at Wycliffe College, Gloucestershire from 1889 to 1895, in June of that year he proposed a motion in the school Debating Society: “that the slaughter of animals for food is neither necessary, beneficial, or right.” He afterwards entered University College, London, where he gained his D.Sc. After thirty years’ work in Boston—New England, it seems, still has its attraction for the Thoreaus of our own time—he planned to retire this year to India, “Perhaps at the foot of the Himalayas or in Tibet; some spot where I shall be least accessible.” In another way this purpose is not wholly unfulfilled. At his father’s desire, Coomaraswamy’s son left Wycliffe College a year ago and went with the Greek explorer and mystic, Marco Pallis, (author of *Peaks and Lamas* and also a vegetarian on spiritual grounds, Mr. Pallis was responsible for English editions of Coomaraswamy’s own books and translated kindred works into English) on a visit to Tibet.

We are aware that in printing these biographical details we should not have Coomaraswamy's approval; they are at best irrelevant, he would gently remind us, they divert attention from what is more important. If the association of English vegetarianism with Coomaraswamy is to be more than a sentimental reminiscence, or still worse a partisan claim to a man whose work we have failed to comprehend, some of us must return to the study of those invaluable books in which his concentrated wisdom still lives and works powerfully for good.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Ranjee Shahani, London*).

B.A., D.LITT. (*Paris*)

I did not know Coomaraswamy personally, nor did I ever have occasion to exchange correspondence with him. But I have read many of his books, and have been impressed by them.

There are, to my mind, three Coomaraswamys: Coomaraswamy, the art critic; Coomaraswamy, the philosophic commentator; and Coomaraswamy, the humanist.

As an art critic, Coomaraswamy might well be called a pioneer; he was one of the first Asiatics to study and explain the arts and crafts of India and Ceylon. Whatever he has written on these topics is characterized by wide knowledge and good taste.

Coomaraswamy the philosophic commentator is excellent; he has dealt in a masterly fashion with Indian and European thought. And his book on Buddhism is fine, at once accurate and true.

The humanist in Coomaraswamy has always appealed to me. This man was no narrow-minded patriot or a partisan writer. He worshipped truth, beauty and goodness wherever he found them. Is this nothing? It is a great deal; here is revealed the spiritual fibre of a man, of any man. Coomaraswamy was both human and humane. It is not given to many of us to be more than that on this tormented planet of ours.

A RESEMBLANCE TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(Sri R. Mutu Ramalingam, Kuala Pilah, Malaya).

In February 1921 when I was a student at Ananda College, Colombo, I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy when he paid what was probably his last visit to Ceylon. Seeing a note in the papers that he was on a brief visit to Ceylon after an extensive tour of the Far East two other students and I called at the Grand Oriental Hotel in order to pay our respects to this great savant who had achieved international reputation as an exponent of Oriental art.

He received us most cordially in the hotel lounge and after enquiring about Ananda College talked to us about America and the work he was doing there. Before we took leave of him we had persuaded him to address the senior students of the College at their weekly literary association meeting the following week.

On 22nd February 1921 Dr. Coomaraswamy lectured to the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) at

the Colombo Museum on *Indian Paintings*. His cousin Sir P. Arunachalam presided at the meeting and paid an eloquent tribute to the lecturer saying, "Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy has won distinction as an apostle of culture and art, and has incidentally turned the tables on the Westerner by snatching one of the plums of the western world. Dr. Coomaraswamy's life should be an example and inspiration to our youth." He referred also to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy's distinguished father Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy who was a well known figure in London Society in the seventies of the last century and to the latter's intimate friendship with Disraeli and Palmerston. It may not be out of place here to say that Disraeli has immortalised Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy in one of his novels in the character *Kusinara*.

The following day Dr. Coomaraswamy visited Ananda College and addressed the students on *Ancient Sinhalese Art*. He expressed his delight at the remarkable progress made by the College since his last visit to the Island and paid a tribute to its founders many of whom he had known intimately.

Dr. Coomaraswamy who was then in his 44th year had a strikingly handsome appearance and bore a close resemblance to Robert Louis Stevenson.

HOMAGE TO COOMARASWAMY

(Mr. Wesley E. Needham, West Haven, Conn., U.S.A.)

"Our study of alien modes of thought and feeling, if it is to be of any real use to us, must be inspired by other than curious motives or a desire to justify our own system. For the common civilization of the world we need a common will, a recognition of com-

mon problems, and to cooperate in their solution. At this moment, when the Western world is beginning to realize that it has failed to attain the fruit of life in a society based on competition and self-assertion, there lies a profound significance in the discovery of Asiatic thought, where it is affirmed with no uncertain voice that the fruit of life can only be attained in a society based on the conception of moral order and mutual responsibility." This might have been written just recently, but many students of Buddhism, and others who are familiar with the works of Dr. Coomaraswamy will recognize its source. Written thirty-five years ago, its significance is even more profound today to students of the history of political morality; equally so to those who study Asiatic culture, comparative religion, or the value of foreign missions. For anyone who doesn't know this reference, it is from the Preface of his book: *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, New York, 1916.

I have never had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Coomaraswamy; neither was I ever privileged to attend one of his lectures. As a person I did not know him; nevertheless, from his writings I have a vivid impression of him as a great humanist, scholar, philologist, interpreter of religious concepts and motives in art. The rich fruit of his extensive research program found expression in many books, essays, pamphlets, and articles (over 500 published titles). From the very beginning of my own studies in Buddhism and its influence on the art and culture of Asiatic countries, I have been guided by his hand in print. His book, quoted above was one of my earliest introductions to Buddhism, over twenty years ago. Years later (in 1944) when my interest had

become focused in the more restricted field of Tibetan language and its hybrid, Tantric-Buddhist literature; prompted by the publication of his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Harvard, 1935, I ventured to write to him about my problems. I shall never forget the thrill of receiving his first letter; in part, a reply to my request for his opinion concerning the significance of two Tantric-Buddhist symbols; the *vajra* (sceptre) and *ghanta* (bell) held in the hands of *Vajradhara*, a popular image by which the Primordial Deity (or Cosmic Principle) of Mahayana Buddhism is traditionally represented.

In later correspondence, he supplied many valuable references to the significance of *mudras* (symbolic hand gestures); many of which were from his own writings, others from the most unlikely sources. He seemed to have read everything, and what is equally fabulous, to have an unfailing memory for the source of any reference. It was a privilege to lean on his colossal scholarship; easy to agree with his convictions, invariably substantiated by ancient textual authority. It is a pleasure to record my gratitude for his many favors.

Only once did we happen to differ. For many years Dr. Coomaraswamy has been collecting from the literature of the ancient world a giant web of evidence, each strand adding conviction that there exists a common ground of Truth in which all philosophies and all world-religions have their roots; the Perennial Philosophy. Certainly one of the foremost, if not the most distinguished exponent of this *Philosophia Perennis* in our generation, Dr. Coomaraswamy could be expected to appreciate the work of an earlier pioneer in this, his favorite field. At least

that is what I assumed when I sent him a leaflet which outlined the fundamental principles of the ancient Wisdom-Religion more generally known as Theosophy. In the generation preceding Dr. Coomaraswamy, Helena P. Blavatsky gathered together the result of a lifetime study and investigation into two thick volumes: *The Secret Doctrine; The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, which she published in 1888 when Ananda Coomaraswamy was eleven years of age. Here in 1,535 pages was a stupendous mass of material culled from ancient texts, undeniable evidence of the substratum of Truth on which all religions and philosophies are based; the source from which they derive whatever Truth they contain. In reply, Dr. Coomaraswamy wrote: "I'm afraid I feel that Theosophy is for the most part a pseudo—or distorted *Philosophia Perennis*." Much as I disliked the one occasion of differing with him out of respect and admiration, nevertheless to agree merely to be agreeable would be indeed hypocritical. In a subsequent letter he wrote: "I agree that some have been led to Eastern thought through meeting with Theosophy, but the best of these have realized that they must go to the *sources themselves* sooner or later." I, for one, am completely satisfied that these sources exist; doubly certain, after becoming familiar with the writings of both H. P. Blavatsky and Dr. Coomaraswamy.

One day I was visiting the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston for the purpose of studying the collection of Tibetan Buddhist paintings. I expressed a desire to meet Dr. Coomaraswamy. The member of the museum staff who was showing me the collection, took me to the museum library which was near Dr. Coomara-

swamy's office and study, only to learn that he was in conference with a visitor. However, I did catch a glimpse of him, my first and last. I am grateful for that much.

He was a majestic, almost regal figure known to thousands of scholars, students and admirers, respected throughout the world of scholarship for his courageous independence of thought, and sincerity of purpose. His life was devoted to search for Truth; a philosopher with one foot on the ground, a mystic with one foot firmly planted in the clouds.

A. K. COOMARASWAMY

(Dr. John Wild, Harvard University, U.S.A.)

I became acquainted with the late Dr. Coomaraswamy about five years ago, and have read a number of his works on philosophy and aesthetics. I was deeply impressed by his extraordinary command of both Oriental and Western thought and by his efforts to reveal an underlying harmony between the deepest insights of both. I think that these efforts were on the whole successful and they have exerted a profound influence on my own reflections. He was a man of very broad learning and profound insight.

A. K. COOMARASWAMY

(Dr. H. Goetz, Baroda, India).

It is only after his death that we begin to realize what a great cultural pioneer the late Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy had been. For to-day, after two bloody world wars and under the threat of a third one, the horrors of which may surpass anything experienced before, it dawns on us that we have

reached one of the decisive turning points of history. The civilizations which had flourished during the last millennium, turn to their grave, in the East as well as in the West, and another world begins to emerge which knows nothing of the old barriers between the races of mankind. East and West meet and are bound to fuse under the new life conditions created by modern science. What of their past will survive, none of us can foretell. But that their best will contribute to shaping the ideas of tomorrow, is certain.

In bringing together their ideas and ideals, Coomaraswamy has been the most influential pioneer of our time. His scientific output has been amazing. However, this is not so important, and there have been other scholars who have done more to explore the cultural heritage of the East or of the West. But with this erudition he combined a sensitiveness and general culture which raised him above the collectors, commentators and interpreters, which permitted him to find the corresponding strains of thought and sentiment, thus not merely evoking an acquaintance, but creating a living connection between traditions which hitherto had seem incompatible.

This sensitiveness made his judgment of Indian art history, often based on quite insufficient evidence, so sure that it proves correct even in the light of the much more specified information available to us today, except where his idiosyncrasies clouded his judgment. His thorough acquaintance with Western art and philosophy permitted him to explain Indian art and philosophy in such terms that they could appear as the very logical conclusion—the Vedanta—of the ideals and hopes of Western thinkers and artists.

Havell had restored the self-esteem of Indian art, often in a one sided and crudely chauvinistic manner, but too often misunderstanding the themes and objects of art for art itself. Coomaraswamy succeeded in making Indian art entrancing also to those who loved the heritage of the Greeks, of the Christian Middle Ages, the Italian and Nordic Renaissance. Everywhere he broke new ground. His work on Rajput painting has opened a new chapter of Indian art history, i.e. that of living Hindu art subsequent to the Muslim conquest. His judgment of quality was infallible. Thus he not only gave an immense impulse to the modern rebirth of Indian art, but contributed also to the reorientation of Western art in the early decades of this century.

In his Western orientation he was a late follower of the Romantic school, of those who opposed the traditional classicism in the name of a return to the intensive religiosity and the mysticism of the Middle Ages. He became, indeed, himself an expert in the philosophy of Mediaeval Christianity. And this knowledge, a knowledge not only of the brain, but also of the heart, permitted him to interpret to our living understanding not only the classic philosophy of the East, but the symbolic language of all virginal stages of world experience. From their hitherto dominant rationalist interpretation, based on the late and degenerate institutional forms of the old religions, he worked back to that early stage when they had still been pregnant with meaning, not dead rites, but symbolic recreations of the living cosmos. Here he discovered living springs which might be able to restore the creative vitality of a world corroded by a sceptic rationalism. These springs are valid also in

our time, because they are not affected by the scientific interpretation of the cosmos, but refer to our personal relationship with it, because their symbols are not such of physics or chemistry but of our intuitive physical reaction to the sphere of our objective experience whatever this latter may be.

But this great discovery was also Coomaraswamy's one great failure. It made him an archaist who extolled the East against the West, the Middle Ages against the modern world. In one way he was right. The blind optimism of progress, the belief that technical inventions imply material progress, and material advance moral improvement and felicity, has since collapsed. Man needs bitter struggles and trials for his maturing and spiritual advancement. But not less it is true, that for the development of his capacities man needs freedom from an all devouring concern for his naked survival, hope and opportunity for creative activity. Coomaraswamy overlooked that the ideals which he cherished, could be possible only in a thinly populated world, and that even there misery and injustice had existed not less than in our own time, that the spiritual wisdom of the few had been paid with the dullness and superstition of the many. Thus he evoked an idealized Mediaeval world and an East such as had never existed, except as the vision of few extraordinary personalities, and contrasted one type of civilizations to another, extolling the young and condemning the late ones, and treating each of them as something permanent.

And yet his own preoccupations with Eastern philosophy and history should have told him, that the cycle of life cannot be halted, that youth and maturity, birth and disintegration are integral, inevitable

aspects of life, that the rationalized technical civilization for the nations of hundred millions is as necessary as the primitive virginity for tribes of some thousands, that only the annihilation of those hundreds of millions could revert the cycle and that this cannot be desired by any moral being though it may come some day in the process of nature. We cannot criticize the working of the cosmos, we can merely try to accept it in its proper perspective. We can condemn the superficial self-satisfied philosophy of the "Age of Progress," but we cannot eliminate it as an integral aspect of world history.

But only during Coomaraswamy's last years such a broader life perspective has begun to dawn on us. He lived in a world which implicitly believed in the progress of the gadgets, or rejected it in a romantic archaism. And though he found a number of prominent companions in his spiritual venture, he had settled in the country where the cult of the gadget had reached its very apogee. This, and the bitter opposition which every pioneer encounters, drove him into a vehement reaction, a one-sided glorification not only of the Middle Ages, but of India and of the whole of Asia, an idealization which refused to see also the other side of life, that other darker side which is the necessary complement, indeed the stimulating background of all spiritual efforts. He had hoped to end his days in India, but died before these plans ripened. He had disapproved of modern Japan and Turkey. So he was spared the last disappointments, the cult of Mammon, party jobbery and black-marketeering which today in the land of his dreams are not a bit better than in the loathed U.S.A.; he was spared to witness the ghastly massacres of the parti-

tion of India, the victory of Communism in China and its rise all over Asia, perhaps even more disillusionments in store for all of us.

And yet, if this irrationalism has to qualify our posthumous appreciation of the critic of our age, it can only intensify our admiration for the man. It would be unfair to criticize Coomaraswamy that he did not yet realize all the implications even of his own message. He has to be judged in his setting. His failures were part of the party set-up in the cultural struggle of his life-time, of the romantic-archaistic ideology opposing the liberal-socialist technocratism. That he fell to it, was the natural reaction of a man who strove for holiness, and therefore dreamed of a promised spiritual land, as others dream of the earthly paradise of Zion or Moscow. But to yearn for a holy world steeped in the Divine, this can do only one who in his heart of hearts is a saint, a *rishi*. And Coomaraswamy's whole vision was immensely more than that of a museum curator, a scholar, an art critic, a philosopher, it was that of a seer and saint.

A. K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Reginald Le May, PhD., London.*)

All students of Eastern art and philosophy owe a great debt to the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, and I gladly add my small tribute to that paid by those who knew him more intimately.

I only met him once, in Boston in the fall of 1933, but I found in him immediately a kindred spirit, and when I returned to England in 1934 to take up the study of Buddhist Art at Cambridge, the works he had

already published were a source not only of great interest, but of a great value to me in my own studies.

His *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* was most helpful as a general guide, and *The Indian Origin of the Buddha Image* a fascinating contribution to a very controversial subject. I admired his handling of it immensely, and, though brought up in a very severe school where evidence is concerned, found myself in general agreement with him in the end.

His approach to any subject was that of an artist. I always remember his writing of the famous Borobodur in Java: "There is no nervous tension, no concentration of force to be compared with that which so impresses the observer at Angkor. Borobodur is like a ripe fruit matured in breathless air: the fulness of its forms is an expression of static wealth rather than the volume that denotes the outward radiation of power."

This is sufficient to show the beauty of his style and, at the same time, the clarity of his exposition.

No doubt there were scholars who did not agree with his views and conclusions, but he always made his reader think, and that is the first object of the true scholar.

I salute his memory with my homage and shall always remember him with gratitude.



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